

**TERROR**



NO. 46

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®

# TALES FROM THE CRYPT

FEATURING...



THE CRYPT-KEEPER



THE OLD WITCH



THE VAULT-KEEPER





# THE CRYPT OF TERROR

WELL, NEXT WELCOME, YOU DEAR LITTLE MORBID MONSTERS, TO MY NEW TERROR-TITLE! E.C.'S BRUESOME THREESOME IS NOW A REVOLTING FOURSOME, AS "THE CRYPT OF TERROR" JOINS WITH "THE VAULT OF HORROR," "THE HAUNT OF FEAR," AND "TALES FROM THE CRYPT" TO BRING YOU HEAPING HELPINGS OF HORROR IN THE OFT-IMITATED E.C. TRADITION. I TRUST YOU'LL BE AMPLY SICKENED BY THIS LATEST COLLECTION OF GADGIVEROUS GAYOTINGS, AS OF NOW, ALL IS AT PEACE AT THE E.C. OFFICES, BUT I EXPECT TROUBLE WHEN THE VAULT-KEEPER AND THE OLD WITCH REALIZE THAT I NOW HAVE TWO MUCK-MASS TO THEIR ONE! OH, WELL, THERE'S NO USE SLAUGHTERING YOUR CHICKENS BEFORE YOU COME TO THE BURNED BRIDGES. NO, COME INTO THE CRYPT OF TERROR AND YOUR MOST IN HOWLS AND HEAVES. YOUR CRYPT-KEEPER WILL LAUNCH MY NEW NAUSEATING NEWSPRINT-NARGOTIC WITH THE BLOOD-CURLING, SPINE-TINGLING YELP-YARN I CALL!

## UPON REFLECTION





CHESTER WAYNE TRUDGED TREMULOUSLY ALONG THE MACADAM ROAD LEADING FROM PLAINSVILLE. HIS HIGH-POWERED RIFLE WAS READY, HIS NERVOUS FINGER ON THE TRIGGER. ABOVE, A FULL ROUND MOON THREW A PALE LIGHT ON THE COUNTRYSIDE, SILHOUETTING EACH SHADY BUSH INTO AN OMINOUS CROUCHING FIGURE. AROUND HIM, EACH FAINT WHISPER OF WIND WARNED, "GO BACK! GO BACK!"...



I SWORE OVER MAMIE'S NAKED BONES I'D GET THE ONE WHO DID IT TO HER. I'VE GOT TO KEEP TRYING! I'VE GOT TO!

THINKING OF MAMIE MADE CHESTER MAD AND DROVE HIM ON. HE WAS ROUNDING A TURN WHEN HE SAW IT NOT FORTY FEET AHEAD. HE STOPPED ABRUPTLY AND CALLED OUT TO THE BLACK-CLOAKED HULK IN THE SHALLOW ROAD-SIDE DITCH...



WHO. WHO'S THERE?

THE STARTLED CREATURE TURNED FROM ITS HUMIN PREY. A GLAMMY SWEAT SMOKE OUT ON CHESTER WHEN HE SAW THE HARRY FACE, THE BLOOD DRIPPING FROM ITS LIMBS AND CHIN...



GABBA! OH, LORD...

THE WEREWOLF BARED ITS FANGS AT THE HUNTER AND SNARLED. CHESTER DROPPED TO ONE KNEE, THREW THE RIFLE TO HIS SHOULDER AND SQUEEZED THE TRIGGER. A HOLLOW-NOSED SS SHRIEKED ACROSS THE ROAD AFTER THE NON-FLEEING BEAST...



HIT HIM! FOR MAMIE! RIP HIM OPEN!

HE WAS NUMB WITH HORROR, HALF-BLIND WITH RAGE AS HE BLASTED AWAY AT THE DISAPPEARING MONSTER TILL THE MAGAZINE WAS EMPTY AND THE HAMMER CLICKED DEAD ON THE EMPTY RIFLE CHAMBER.



MISSED HIM... SON... MAMIE! I SOB... MISSED!

LOATH TO LOOK UPON THE GORY REMAINS THAT LAY IN THE DITCH, CHESTER WAS NEVERTHELESS DRAWN TOWARD THEM AS THOUGH BY SOME MAGNET OF MOROSITY. HE APPROACHED ON TREMBLING LEGS... LOOKED... THEN RECOILED IN HORROR AT THE SIGHT OF BARE BONE AND RAW, HALF-EATEN FLESH...



OH, WRE!

A GREAT VIOLENT SICKNESS WRENCHED AT CHESTER'S INWARDS... AND HE TURNED, RETCHING, AND RAN THE WHOLE WAY BACK TO PLAINSVILLE...





THE MEN IN WAILEY'S TAVERN  
LEAPED TO THEIR FEET AS CHESTER  
BURST THROUGH THE DOOR,  
HEADED FOR THE BAR. THEY SAW  
THE RIFLE AND THE LOOK ON HIS  
FACE AND THEY KNEW...

WHO... WHO WAS IT THIS TIME, CHET?  
QUICK, FRANK! POUR ME SOME-  
THIN' STRAIGHT!



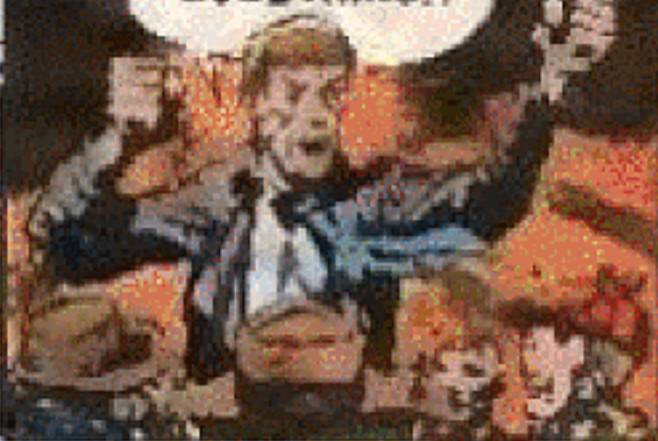
CHESTER TOSSED OFF A DOUBLE  
BOURBON... AND WHILE IT WAS STILL  
BURNING DOWN, HE PANTED OUT THE  
TERRIBLE DETAILS OF HIS HARROW-  
ING EXPERIENCE...

GOD, MAN! A FARMER HAS A  
TELL US WHO PLACE THREE MILES  
IT WAS WEVE OUT... SEEN HIM IN  
ALL GOT TOWN... NICE GUY.  
FAMILIES! QUIET. HE'S GONNA  
BE SHOT A LONG,  
LONG TIME NOW...  
LIKE MY NANNIE!



AT FIRST THE MEN EXCHANGED  
SULKY SLANCES OF RELIEF, BUT  
AFTER A FEW MOMENTS OF BROODING  
SILENCE, PAUL MYERS CLIMBED ONTO  
A TABLE AND SHOUTED...

THAT MAKES FIVE VICTIMS IN AS  
MANY MONTHS... AND WHY AIN'T  
WE PAYIN' FOR PROTECTION IN  
THIS ROTTEN TOWN? ALL WE GET  
FROM MAYOR HANSON IS PROMISES.  
DO WE WAIT TILL THAT WEREWOLF  
GRABS SOMEONE CLOSE TO US  
BEFORE WE MAKE HANSON DO  
SOMETHING?!



IT ALREADY GOT SOMEONE  
CLOSE TO ME, PAUL! MY  
WIFE NANNIE!



THAT GIVES YOU  
MORE RIGHT TO  
TELL THE MAYOR  
OFF, CHET. YOU LEAD  
THE WAY AND WE'LL  
BACK YOU UP!

FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER, MAYOR  
ELWOOD HANSON WAS AWAKENED BY  
SHOUTS OF HIS NAME. HE LEANED  
UNEASILY FROM THE BEDROOM WIN-  
DOW OF HIS COLONIAL HOME AND  
LOOKED DOWN AT THE ANGRY CROWD  
BELOW...

PLEASE, GENTLEMEN! THEN COME  
MY WIFE IS AWAKE! ON DOWN,  
MAYOR!



SOON, HIS PORTLY PAJAMA-CLAD  
FIGURE WRAPPED IN A SILKEN ROBE,  
THE DISMIFIED MAYOR OF PLAIN-  
VILLE STOOD BEFORE HIS TOWN-  
PEOPLE, LISTENING TO THE FRIGHT-  
FUL NEWS...

TERRIBLE! TERRIBLE!  
I'LL SEND OFFICIAL CON-  
DOLENCES TO HIS WIDOW  
IN THE MORNING...



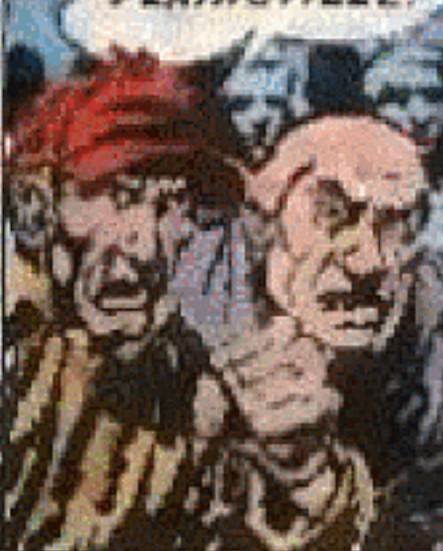
A FAT LOT OF GOOD THAT'LL  
DO, MAYOR! WHAT ABOUT  
THE PROTECTION YOU  
PROMISED US?



WHAT CAN I DO, MR.  
WAYNE? FOR ONE  
THING, THIS FIENDISH  
ATTACK TOOK PLACE  
OUTSIDE OF TOWN...  
BEYOND MY JURISDICTION



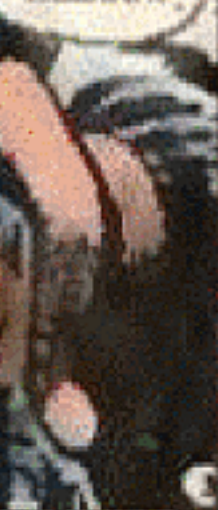
MY WIFE'S BODY WAS  
HANDLED RIGHT HERE  
ON THE STREETS OF  
PLAINVILLE!



WE WANT  
MORE THAN  
WORDS, MAYOR!



WHAT'RE  
YOU GOING  
TO DO  
ABOUT IT,  
HANSON?





MAYOR HANSON TRIED TO PACIFY THE ROILED MOB...

PLEASE, GENTLE-  
MEN! NOW, MR.  
WAYNE, YOU SAY  
YOU FIRED SEVERAL  
SILVER BULLETS  
AT THE WEREWOLF...  
THEY WERE SILVER  
BULLETS, OF COURSE!

SILVER? I  
DON'T GET  
YOU, MAYOR.  
I USED OLD-  
LOW-ROSED  
33'S... LEAD.  
NOT SILVER.  
THEY'RE LIKE  
DUM-DUMS...

MAYOR HANSON WAS VERY ADEPT AT SHIFTING THE PRESSURE FROM HIMSELF...

WELL, I MIGHT HAVE KNOWN  
SOMEONE WOULD GO OFF HALF-  
COCKED! MY DEAR MR. WAYNE...  
IF YOU'D TAKEN THE TROUBLE  
TO HEAD UP ON WEREWOLVES, AS  
I HAVE, YOU'D KNOW THAT ONLY  
A SILVER BULLET CAN KILL A  
WEREWOLF!

THE CROWD FELL SILENT WITH EMBARRASSMENT FOR NO MAN WISHED TO ADMIT IGNORANCE TO HIS NEIGHBOR. MAYOR HANSON SMILED PATRONIZINGLY...

I'LL WELCOME ANYONE OF YOU  
TO MY LIBRARY WHO'D CARE TO  
INFORM HIMSELF ON THE HABITS  
OF THE LYCANTHROPE. MEAN-  
WHILE, MY FELLOW CITIZENS, BE  
CALM AND... GOOD-NIGHT...



THE MAYOR WENT BACK INTO HIS STATELY HOME, THE CROWD DISPERSED, AND CHESTER WAYNE JOINED PAUL MYERS AND CHICK ROBERTS IN A GLOOMY SESSION AT MARLEY'S TAVERN...

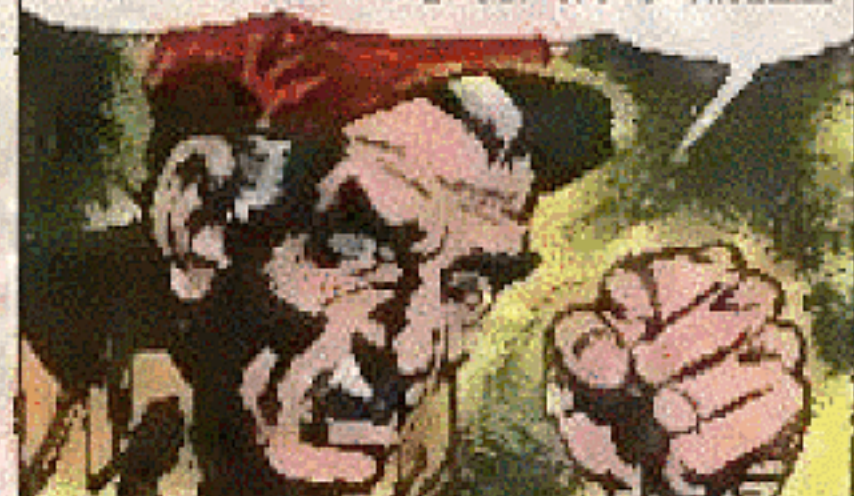
THERE NEVER WAS A MAN BETTER AT  
SQUIRMIN' OUT OF A HOT SPOT THAN  
MAYOR HANSON!

WE'RE NO BETTER  
OFF THAN BEFORE  
WE CALLED ON HIM!



CHESTER WAYNE DINNAGED...

YES, WE ARE! WE HAVE TIME... A WHOLE  
MONTH BEFORE THE NEXT FULL MOON. WE  
CAN START MELTING DOWN SILVER COINS  
FOR BULLETS! WE CAN BE READY THE  
NEXT TIME THAT WEREWOLF SHOWS HIMSELF...



SO MOST OF THE PEOPLE OF PLAINVILLE LIVED IN DREAD OF THE COMING FULL MOON... AND THE NIGHT IT ARRIVED, EVERYONE STAYED BEHIND LOCKED DOORS AND SHUTTERED WINDOWS. ONLY CLARA HANSON, THE MAYOR'S WIFE, VENTURED OUT TO VISIT HER AGED AND AILING MOTHER...

I'VE GOT TO BE HUNTING ALONG, MAMA  
ELWOOD WILL BE WORRYING ABOUT  
ME! PROMISE YOU'LL TAKE IT EASY.

WHAT ELSE  
COULD I DO  
IN THIS  
WHEELCHAIR,  
CLARA?



IT WAS JUST THREE SHORT BLOCKS FROM HER MOTHER'S HOUSE TO THE HANSON HOME. CLARA WALKED UNAFRAID, UNTIL SHE SAW THE FULL YELLOW MOON HANGING HIGH ABOVE THE VILLAGE SQUARE...

GULP... THANK HEAVENS IT'S  
NOT FAR!





CLARA HANSON HURRIED HER STEPS, FINDING SOME LITTLE COMFORT AS THE GUICE CLIPPING OF HER HEELS ALONG THE DESERTED SIDEWALK KEPT TIME WITH THE RAPID BEATING OF HER PACING HEART. SHE'D REACHED THE SQUARE ONLY ONE BLOCK FROM HOME, WHEN SHE HEARD THE TERRIFYING SHRIEL. SHE SPUN AROUND, HER BLOOD TURNING TO ICE IN HER VEINS.



CHORE

HER ATTEMPTED SCREAM CAME FORTH AS NO MORE THAN AN ARITHMETIC WHESING SQUEAL. THE FLESH-STAYED BEAST SPRAH... SIPPING ITS GLEAMING FANGS INTO HER THROBBING THROAT... RIPPING IT OPEN... FOUNTAINING THE BLOOD OVER ITS MERRY FACE... INTO ITS RED BOILING EYES...



YAA...GHH...GHAA...GONH

WHILE JUST ACROSS THE SQUARE, IN MARLEY'S TAVERN, CHESTER WAYNE AND PAUL MEERS WERE PORTIFYING THEMSELVES AT THE BAR.



WE'RE READY FOR 'EM THIS TIME, FRANK! YES! GOT SILVER BULLETS IN OUR RIFLES...

THAT'S RIGHT, FRANK!

FRANK! FAT LOT OF GOOD YOU'RE DOIN' TALKIN' ABOUT IT HERE! IF YOU'RE COME AFTER ME, BOY! IF YOU'RE SCARED, THEN ADMIT IT AND QUIT BULLIN'!

SHEEPLISHLY, THEY RICKED UP THEIR SILVER-BULLET-LOADED BARRELS AND STALKED FROM THE TAVERN, ACROSS THE SQUARE. THEY GOT NO FURTHER THAN WHERE THE GHOSTLY SKELETON OF CLARA HANSON LAY IN A POOL OF CONGEEALING BORE, HER BLOOD SOAKED CLOTHES STREWN ABOUT...



PAUL CHORE...

WE'RE...WE'RE TOO LATE! G'DON! LET'S GET THE MAYOR! LET'S MAKE HIM SEE FOR HIMSELF!

MAYOR HANSON WAS REARLY TROUBLED WHEN HE FACED THE TWO WHITE-FACED MEN ACROSS HIS THRESHOLD...



...STRUCK AGAIN? OH LORD! NO! I JUST PHONED MY MOTHER-IN-LAW! CLARA HANSON COME HOME YET? WAS IT A...A WOMAN?

PAUL!

YEAN! I'M THINKIN' THE SAME THING! YOU BETTER GET DRESSED, MAYOR!



THE MAYOR RECOGNIZED HIS WIFE'S CLOTHES AT ONCE, WITH MUCH LOUD WAILING AND ANGUISHED DOBS, HE FELL ACROSS HER FLESH-STRIPPED BONES...

CLARA... MY CLARA... ALL THAT CARRYIN ON HON'T HELP NEAR NONE... LEAVE HIM ALONE, PAUL!



AT LAST THE MAYOR AROSE AND HIS TEAR-REDDENED EYES BLAZED

THAT FILTHY VILE THING! I'LL GET EVERY ABLE-BODIED MAN IN THIS TOWN AFTER IT! THIS TIME IT'S YOUR WIFE, AND THE SING'S ON THE OTHER FOOT! LAY OFF, WILL YOU, PAUL!



EVERY MAN WILL BE ARMED! THERE'LL BE SILVER BULLETS FOR ALL! A VIGILANTE COMMITTEE, THAT'S WHAT WE'LL HAVE! WE'LL DIVIDE INTO GROUPS... COME THE COUNTRYSIDE! COME THE NEXT FULL MOON WE'LL BE WAITING!



WITHIN TWENTY-EIGHT DAYS, EVERY CAPABLE MAN IN PLAINSVILLE HAD RECEIVED A RIFLE AND FIVE SILVER BULLETS. EVERYONE HAD PRACTISED WITH MOVING TARGETS. EVERYONE WAS READY. THE AFTERNOON BEFORE THE NIGHT OF THE FULL MOON THE MEN THROUGED BEFORE MAYOR HANSON'S MANSION.

WE'LL START NOW... IN TROUPE OF SIX... IN DAYLIGHT... SO WE CAN ACQUAINT OURSELVES WITH EACH AREA! NOW, REMEMBER...



...STAY CLOSE TOGETHER AND MAKE SURE OF WHAT YOU'RE SHOOTING AT! WHEN YOU SEE SOMETHING MOVE, MAKE CERTAIN IT ISN'T ONE OF YOUR OWN PARTY. PAR UP! ONE MAN USE A LIGHT WHILE THE OTHER MAN DOES THE SHOOTING! WE DON'T WANT ANY INNOCENT PEOPLE KILLED!



IT WAS TWILIGHT WHEN MAYOR HANSON, WEARING A RED BRIDE SHOOTING JACKET AND SCARLET HUNTER'S CAP, CLIMBED FROM HIS CAR AT THE RENDEZVOUS SPOT FOR HIS GROUP. CHESTER WAYNE GRINNED...

PIPE THE FANCY OUTFIT ON HIS HONOR, PAUL. YOU COULD SEE IT IN A GOAL WINE AT MIDNIGHT. HUNTING IN THE DARK IS A DANGEROUS BUSINESS, MR. WAYNE. I'D RATHER BE SAFE THAN SORRY.



WHEN DARKNESS CAME, THE MEN WERE ALERT AND AMPY! MATT STEVENS, WITH HIS GROUP IN TOWN, SAW A SUSPICIOUS FIGURE, SCREAMED OUT AFTER IT, AND BEGAN SHOOTING...

CUT THAT OUT, MATT! THE MAYOR SAID TO MAKE SURE WHAT YOU'RE SHOOTING AT!





LUCKILY, MATT'S SHOTS WERE  
RILE. THE FIGURE TURNED OUT TO  
BE A FAMILIAR BRUNK THEY ALL  
KNEW WELL...

WELL, WHAT'D YOU RUN - BOUSED I'M  
FOR IF YOU GONNA BE A  
AREN'T SITTIN' DUCK  
THE WERE WHEN SOMEONE  
WOLF? OPENSH UP ON  
ME, MATT SHTEVENS!



MEANWHILE, MAYOR HANSON AND  
HIS PARTY'D SURROUNDED A STRANGE  
OLD WOMAN WALKING ALONG A  
LONELY DARK ROAD...

LADY, YOU'RE TAKING  
A CHANCE BEING  
OUT TONIGHT?  
BETTER LET US  
SEE YOU HOME!  
I DON'T  
NEED Y'RE  
SEED HOME!  
I AIN'T  
SKEERED!



PAUL MYERS STUDIED THE OLD WOMAN.  
HOLD ON, MAYOR! MAYBE YOU'VE  
WHO SAYS THE GOT SOMETHING  
WEREWOLF'S THERE, MYERS. I  
GOT TO BE A MONT HADN'T THOUGHT  
I'VE SEEN THIS / OF A FEMALE  
QUEER DAME AROUND WEREWOLF!  
I NEVER LIKED  
HER LOOKS!



MAYOR HANSON AND PAUL MYERS REVEALED THEIR  
THEORY TO THE OTHERS OF THEIR PARTY...

WELL, HOW CAN WE WE'LL TAKE HER BACK TO MY  
TELL IF SHE IS THE PLACE! I HAVE THAT BOOK!  
WEREWOLF? IT TELLS HOW TO RECOGNIZE  
A WEREWOLF... EVEN IN  
HUMAN FORM!



GNEY WAYNE BRANDISHED HIS RIFLE AND SCOFFED...

AW, PUTS TO YOUR BOOK, ... AND IF SHE DOESN'T,  
MAYOR. IN LESS THAN TWENTY THEN WE'VE WASTED  
MINUTES, THE MOON WILL BE VALUABLE TIME... PERHAPS  
FULL. THEN, IF THE OLD WAS EVEN LET THE REAL  
TURNS OUT TO BE WHAT WEREWOLF ESCAPE  
WE'RE AFTER, WE LET HER  
HAVE IT!



THEY MADE THEIR WAY BACK TO THE MAYOR'S CAR.  
THE OLD WAS FOUGHT THEM AS THEY TRIED TO PUSH  
HER IN. ONE EVEN BIT PAUL'S HAND...

OWW! THE DIRTY I AIN'T GOIN'! YOU  
BITCH! CAN'T MAKE ME  
GO!



PAUL SOLVED THE PROBLEM. HE SWUNG HIS RIFLE-BUTT,  
CLUBBING THE OLD WOMAN ACROSS THE SIDE OF HER HEAD.

THIS... THIS IS KIDNAPPING! AHH, CLIMB OFF MY  
AFTER ALL, WE STILL HAVE NO BACK, MAYOR! AND  
PROOF! YOU SHOULDN'T STEP ON IT! SHE'S  
HAVE HIT HER... OUT COLD!





IT TOOK HIM OVER FIFTEEN MINUTES TO REACH THE MAYOR'S HOUSE IN TOWN. BY THAT TIME, THE OLD MAN HAD REVIVED.

I'LL SET THE DOOR AND COME RIGHT OUT! HOLD HER!

I STILL THINK YOU'RE CRAZY, HANSON! IN LESS THAN THREE MINUTES THE MOON WILL BE FULL... AND THEN WE'LL KNOW FOR SURE!



MAYOR HANSON HURRIED INTO THE HOUSE, STUMBLING DOWN THE DIMLY LIT HALL TO THE DARK LIBRARY. HE STOPPED SUDDENLY AS HE REACHED THE DOOR... AND STARED AT THE GLEAMING EYES BURNING IN THE BLACKNESS BEYOND.

WHAT THE...? SOMEONE'S IN THERE! IT'S IT'S...



MAYOR HANSON MOVED FORWARD SLOWLY, HIS RIFLE READY. THEN, ALL AT ONCE, HE SAW IT... THE HARRY FACE... THE GLEAMING FANGS FLASHING FROM BEHIND THE GRINLING CROOK MOUTH. HE SCREAMED...

IT'S THE WEREWOLF!



HE FIRED, POINT-BLANK, AGAIN AND AGAIN. THE VILE FEROCIOUS BEAST JUST STOOD THERE... SNARLING AT HIM...

MY GOD! THE SILVER BULLETS! THEY DON'T KILL HIM! I COULDN'T MISS... NOT AT THIS RANGE...



OUTSIDE, THE MEN HEARD THE SHOTS AND TOOK FOR THE HOUSE... THE MAYOR STUMBLING TO THE LIBRARY LIGHT SWITCH, FLIPPING IT ON. HE SHRIEKED AS THE BLOW FLOODED THE ROOM...

YAAAAAHHHHH!! IN THERE! THE LIBRARY!

IT'S THE MAYOR! HE'S PROBABLY BEING ATTACKED BY THE WEREWOLF!



MAYOR ELWOOD HANSON STOOD BEFORE THE FULL-LENGTH LIBRARY MIRROR, SNARLING AND SHRIEKING, STARRING HYPNOTICALLY AT THE BULLET HOLES HE'D MADE WHEN HE'D SHOT AT HIS OWN REFLECTION.

GOOD LORD!

CHOKER!



AND THAT'S THE FIRST SCREAM-STORY IN MY NEW PUTRID PENITENTIAL, FIENDS. NATURALLY, THEY SHOT MAYOR WEREWOLF AFTER THAT. IN FACT THEY PUMPED HIM SO FULL OF SILVER BULLETS, HE HAD TO BE LOWERED INTO HIS GRAVE WITH A DERRICK! THEN A COUPLE OF GRAVE-ROBBERS HEARD ABOUT THE SILVER... AND BUT THAT'S

ANOTHER STORY! I'LL DO THAT UP SOME OTHER TIME. NOW THE VAULT-KEEPER WAITS WITH HIS CREEPY CONTRIBUTION TO THIS MORBID MESS. I'LL BE BACK LATER. 'BYE, NOW.





# THE VAULT OF HORROR!

WELL, WELL! AND NOW THAT C.R. HAS CURDLED YOUR ANEMIC BLOOD, IT'S TIME FOR YOUR HOST IN THE VAULT OF HORROR, THE VAULT-KEEPER... NAMELY, ME... TO ENTERTAIN YOU WITH A SPINE-TINGLING, NAUSEATING NOVELETTE FROM MY GREEP COLLECTION. LET'S SEE! OH... LET'S NOT WASTE TEST! THIS IS A GOOD BONY ONE! IT'S CALLED...

## BLIND ALLEYS

THE "HOME" WAS OLD AND PAINT-STARVED AND DRAFTY AND BADLY IN NEED OF REPAIR. THE ROOF LEAKED AND THE WINDOWS RATTLED AND WERE COVERED WITH YEARS OF DUST AND GRIME. THE INMATES OF THE HOME WALKED GRIM-FACED AND SILENT THROUGH CRACKED PLASTER HALLS, OR SAT IN DINY ROOMS ON CRAWLING BEDS. THEY SHIVERED IN THE COLD WHEN WINTER CAME... WHEN THERE WAS NO STEAM TO WARM THE RUSTED RADIATORS...



...AND THEY SWELTERED IN THE HEAT WHEN SUMMER BURNED... WHEN LONG-BROKEN FANS LAY IDLE AND UNREPAIRED AND UNABLE TO WAFT A BREATH OF COOLING RELIEF...





BUT THEY COULD NOT SEE THE PAINT-PEELED WALLS...THE DIRT CLOUDED WINDOWS...THE DUSTY AND COB-WEBBED HALLS OF THIS, THEIR HOME...THESE INMATES, THEY COULD NOT SEE THE ROACHES AND THE RATS SCAMPENING ACROSS THE UNWASHED FLOORS...



... AS THIS WAS A "HOME" FOR THE BLIND...FOR WRETCHED SOULS WHO LIVED IN WORLDS OF DARKNESS WHO STARED WITH UNSEEING EYES AT THE MISERY AROUND THEM...AND YET KNEW AND HATED ALL OF IT...



FOR THE LOSS OF ONE SENSE ONLY TENDS TO SHARPEN THE OTHERS...TO TUNE THEM MORE FINELY...TO MAKE THEM MORE ACUTE. THE INMATES KNEW BECAUSE THEY COULD TASTE...AND TOUCH...AND SMELL AND HEAR. THEY COULD TASTE THE SPOILED AND ROTTED FOOD PLACED BEFORE THEM AT MEALTIMES.



THEY COULD TOUCH THE STICKY, FILMY GOBBERS...THE DUST LAYERS COVERING EVERYTHING...



THEY COULD SMELL THE FOUL ODORS OF MILDEW AND FAULTY PLUMBING AND POOR SANITATION AND NEGLECT...



THEY COULD HEAR THE RATS SCAMPENING AND THE ROACHES CRAWLING AND THE TERMITES BURROWING AND THE LICE AND BED-BUGS AND FLIES AND A THOUSAND OTHER CREATURES OF FILTH THAT MOVED.



AND THEY COULD HEAR OTHER CREATURES TOO...OTHER CREATURES OF FILTH THAT MOVED. THEY COULD HEAR MR. GRUNWALD, THE HOME'S DIRECTOR, IN HIS OFFICE-APARTMENT DOWNSTAIRS, ENTERTAINING HIS LATEST LADY-FRIEND WITH THE MONEY HE'D SAVED ON THEM...THE INMATES...



THEY COULD HEAR HIS ALMOST MANIACAL LAUGHTER AND THE CLINKING OF CHAMPAGNE GLASSES. THEY COULD SMELL THE MOUTH-WATERING ODORS OF THE LAVISH SUPPER HE WAS ENJOYING, AND THEY COULD SEE, IN THEIR MINDS' EYES, THE LUXURIES WITH WHICH HE'D SELFISHLY SURROUNDED HIMSELF AT THEIR EXPENSE...





YES, BUNNER BUNNWARD HAD **INDEED** SURROUNDED HIMSELF WITH LUXURIES...PAID FOR WITH THE **ALLOT-MENTS** GIVEN HIM FOR EACH BLIND INMATE. WHY **PAINTING PLASTER DREARY WALLS** THAT THEY'D NEVER SEE, WHEN HE COULD HAVE AN **AIR-CONDITIONER** FOR THOSE BLISTERING SUMMER DAYS?



WHY **LAUNDER SHEETS AND BLANKETS AND CLOTHES** OF DIRT-SWEARS AND SWEAT-STAINED THAT THEY'D NEVER SEE WHEN HE COULD HAVE A **HEATER** FOR THOSE **BILLING WINTER NIGHTS?**



WHY GIVE THOSE POOR MISERABLE BLIND FOOLS **BEAUTY** IF THEY COULD NOT **APPRECIATE** BEAUTY? BUNNER BUNNWARD'D FELT THAT WAY, SO HE'D **SKIMPED** ON THE INMATES...**CUT CORNERS HERE... DENIED THERE...** AND WITH THE **SUPPLUS**, HE'D SUPPLIED HIMSELF WITH BEAUTY...



**FINE FURNITURE...GOOD BOOKS... PLUSH RUGS...EXPENSIVE DRAPES...** AN OCCASIONAL EVENING OF **FEMALE COMPANIONSHIP**... THEY WERE ALL BUNNER'S TO ENJOY. HE'D EVEN BOUGHT A **DOG...A VICIOUS DOG...** HE'D HAD A **GOOD REASON...**



FOR BUNNER'D KNOWN THAT **ANOTHER** SENSE HAD REPLACED THE INMATES' SENSE OF SIGHT...A **DEEP-SEED** SENSE...**BROWING** EACH DAY, HE'D BEEN IT IN THEIR WEEDED- BLIND EYES, IN THEIR SILENT SMILE **FACES**. HE'D SEEN THEIR **BROWING HATE** SO HE'D BOUGHT THE DOG FOR **PROTECTION**...



AND WITH THE DOG AT HIS SIDE, BUNNER'D WALKED **SELF-CONFIDENTLY** BEFORE THEM, KNOWING THAT HIS SIGHT AND THE DOG'S STRENGTH WOULD KEEP HIM FROM **HARM**.



AND SO, HE'D BEEN ABLE TO **CONTINUE** TO ENJOY HIS FINEST LITTLE AMPLIFICATIONS...LIKE **TRIPPING** HELPLESS UNSUSPECTING INMATES AS THEY'D TOTTER BLINDLY BY HIM...





...OR REMOVING SOMETHING THAT THEY'D COME TO KNOW WAS THERE AND COUNTED ON...



THE BARRISTER! WHERE'S THE BA  
?AAAAA... BOOHNN.

HEH  
HEH!

...OR ADDING SOMETHING NEW...



OWWWW!

HEH, HEH,

...OR BEING JUST MEAN...



HAW, HAW!

YES, BUNNER'D AMUSED HIMSELF WITH HIS CHARGES' INABILITY TO SEE HE'D BEEN SADISTIC WITH HIS TORTURES, AND HE'D BROWN FAT ON HIS DEHIALS, AND HIS CHARGES HAD SAT IN THEIR WORLD OF DARKNESS AND WAITED LISTENING.



BUNNER... PLEASE! IT'S THE DOG! HE MAKES ME NERVOUS! I'M AFRAID OF DOGS!

I'M SORRY, BAST! HERE, BOY! HERE!

WAITING FOR THEIR OPPORTUNITY  
YOU STAY OUT THERE TILL BUNNER IS THROUGH!



...AND TONIGHT, THEIR OPPORTUNITY CAME...



HUNARY, BOOBY? NICE, BOOBY! HERE, BOOBY! HERE'S SOME MEAT!

...SO THEY LURED THE DOG DOWN INTO THE OLD MUSTY CELLAR OF THE HOME WITH SOME MEAT-SCRAPE THEY'D SAVED FROM THEIR SCANT MEALS...



IN HERE, BOOBY! COME, BOY!

QUICKLY! LOCK HIM UP!



AND THEN THEY WAITED. THEY WAITED FOR GUNNER'S FRIEND OF THE EVENING TO LEAVE...

THEY WAITED FOR GUNNER TO MISS HIS DOG...

...AND THEN THEY STRUCK! BLINDLY, UNSEEING... THEY SURROUNDED THEIR HATED ENEMY...



GOODNIGHT, GUNNER! AND THANKS...

THANK YOU, MY DEAR...



BRUTUS? WHERE ARE YOU? BRUTUS? BRU-

WHAT IS IT? WHAT DO YOU WANT? GO BACK TO YOUR ROOMS ALL OF YOU!



...AND DROGGED HIM TO THE CELLAR TOO... TO ANOTHER WAITING CUBICLE...

BUT GUNNER'S ONLY ANSWER WAS THE SOFT WHINE OF THE DOG IN THE ADJOINING CUBICLE...



NO! NO! PLEASE! BRUTUS, HELP ME! WHERE ARE YOU? BRUTUS!



BRUTUS! THEY'VE GOT YOU TOO!

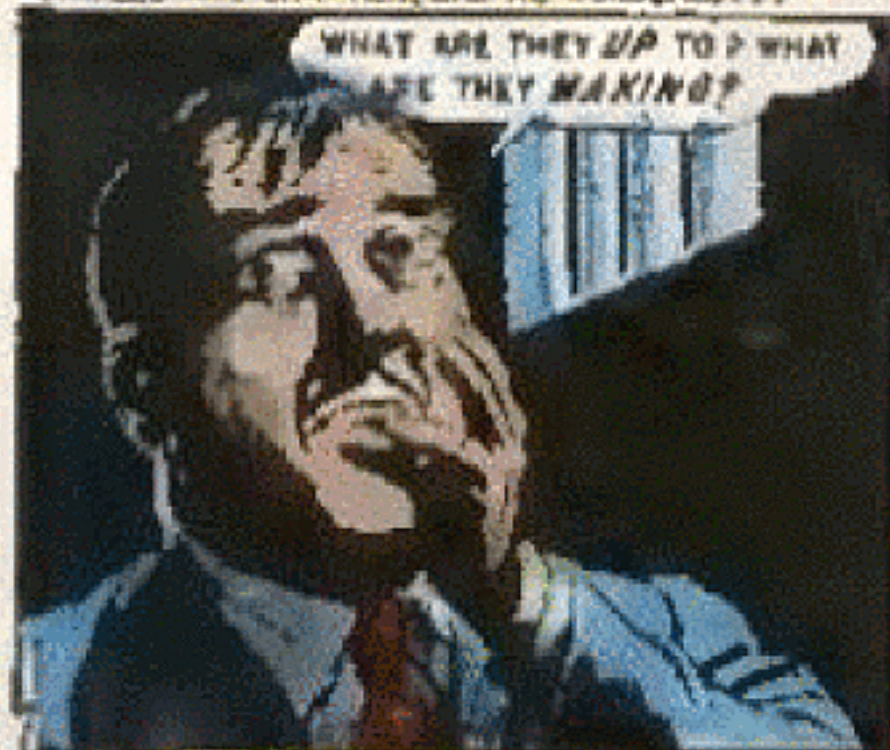
THEN THEY BEGAN TO WORK. THEY DRAGGED OUT OLD DIMMERS AND RUSTY NAILS AND ONE-PILE Saws.

AND THEY WENT THROUGH THE HOME AND CUT AND RIPPED AND CHOPPED THE LUMBER THEY NEEDED.





GUNNER LISTENED TO THE HAMMERING ECHOING THROUGH THE CELLAR. HE LISTENED TO THEIR SIGGLES AND CHATTER, AND HE WONDERED...



WHAT ARE THEY UP TO? WHAT ARE THEY MAKING?

AND HE LISTENED AS THE NIGHT PASSED AND DAWN CAME AND THE DOG IN THE CUBICLE NEXT DOOR GREW HUNGRY AND FAGED AND HOWLED AND SCRATCHED AS ITS STOMACH GNAWED...



FEED BRUTUS, YOU FOOLS! HE'LL GET WILD IF YOU DON'T! HE'LL BE DANGEROUS!

WE KNOW, MR. BRUNWALD!

THE DAY PASSED AND NIGHT CAME AGAIN. GUNNER'S OWN STOMACH ACHED WITH HUNGER, AND STILL THEY HAMMERED AND SANG AND LAUGHED AND TALKED...



WHAT ARE YOU MAKING? WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

YOU'LL SEE, MR. BRUNWALD!

THE DOG IN THE NEXT CUBICLE HOWLED ALL THAT NIGHT, Slobbering and snarling and scratching. GUNNER SHUDDERED. THE DOG WAS A BEAST, NOW... A HUNGER-CRAZED BEAST. AND THE HAMMERING WENT ON...



FOOD! GIVE ME SOME FOOD! PLEASE

DO YOU CALL WHAT YOU'VE BEEN FEEDING US FOOD, MR. BRUNWALD?

DAWN CAME AGAIN AND THE SECOND DAY PASSED. NEXT DOOR, THE DOG WAS FIGHTING WITH ITSELF, THROWING ITSELF AGAINST THE CUBICLE SIDES AND HOWLING MADLY...



BRUTUS WILL KILL ANYONE THAT SETS FOOT IN THERE NOW

GUNNER HIMSELF WAS HALF-CRAZED WITH HUNGER AS THE THIRD NIGHT CAME. AND THEN, TOWARDS MIDDNIGHT, THE HAMMERING STOPPED. THE CELLAR WAS SUDDENLY FLOODED WITH LIGHT. EVEN BRUTUS STOPPED SNARLING IN ANTICIPATION...



THEY'RE... THEY'RE OPENING MY CUBICLE

THEY STOOD BEFORE HIM... DIRTY, SWEATED, TIRED FROM LONG HOURS OF LABOR... THE IMMIGRANT... THE BLIND UNSEEING CARPENTERS. GUNNER GLANCED OUT AT THEM...



COME, MR. BRUNWALD! YOU ARE FREE TO GO!

FOLLOW US, MR. BRUNWALD! WE BUILT THIS JUST FOR YOU! IT LEADS TO THE CELLAR STEPS... AND FREEDOM!



GUNNER STOOD UP AS THEY DARTED OFF. HE COULD HEAR THEIR FOOTSTEPS FADE AS THEY ROUNDED CORNERS AND RAN DOWN LONG CORRIDORS THAT TURNED AND TWISTED AND DOUBLED BACK. GUNNER STARED...

THEY... THEY BUILT A MAZE? A PUZZLE? I HAVE TO FIGURE IT OUT?

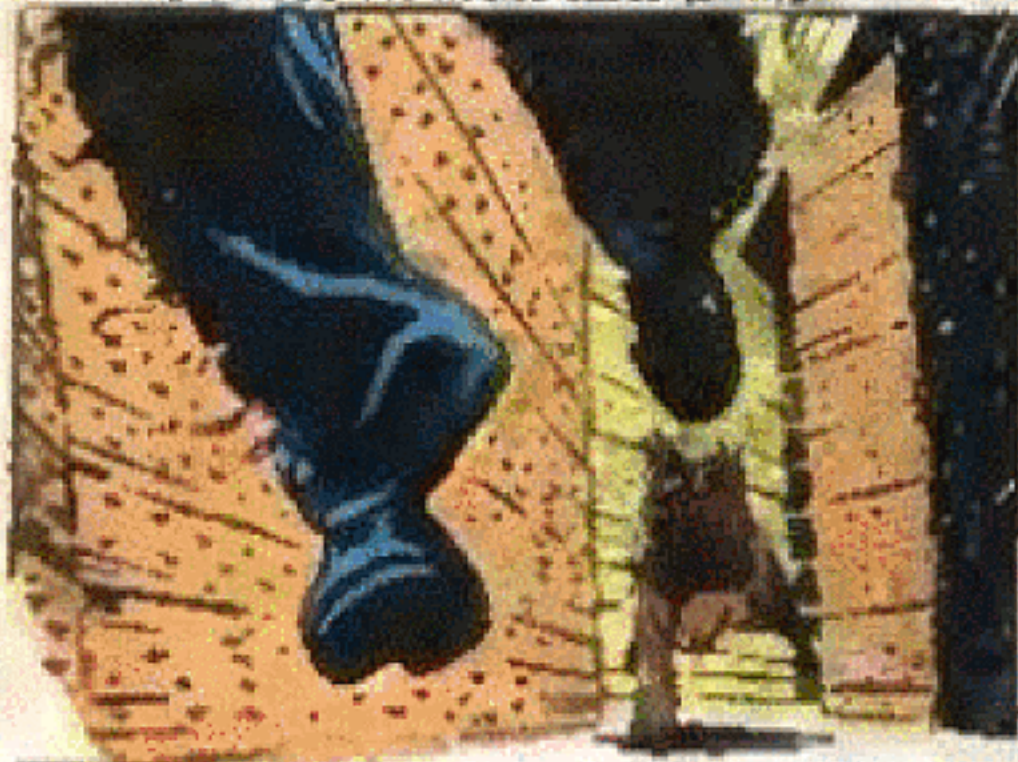


GUNNER LAUGHED TO HIMSELF AS HE STARTED OUT OF HIS DUNGEON...

THE FOOL! IF I'M CAREFUL, IF I TAKE MY TIME... I'LL NEVER HAVE TO TOUCH THE WALLS... JUST WALK SLOWLY LIKE THIS CAREFUL



HE BRUSHED AGAINST THE RAZOR BLADES, SLASHING HIS FLESH. HE STUMBLERED AND GOT UP... RAN ON, FRIGHTENED... WILD... DOWN THROUGH THE TWISTING, DOUBLING-BACK MAZE CORRIDORS WITH THE RAZOR-LINED WALLS AND THE DOBERING HOUND CLOSE BEHIND.



AND THEN GUNNER SAW THE GLEAMING SLITTING SLIVERS OF STEEL EMBEDDED IN THE MAZE WALLS...

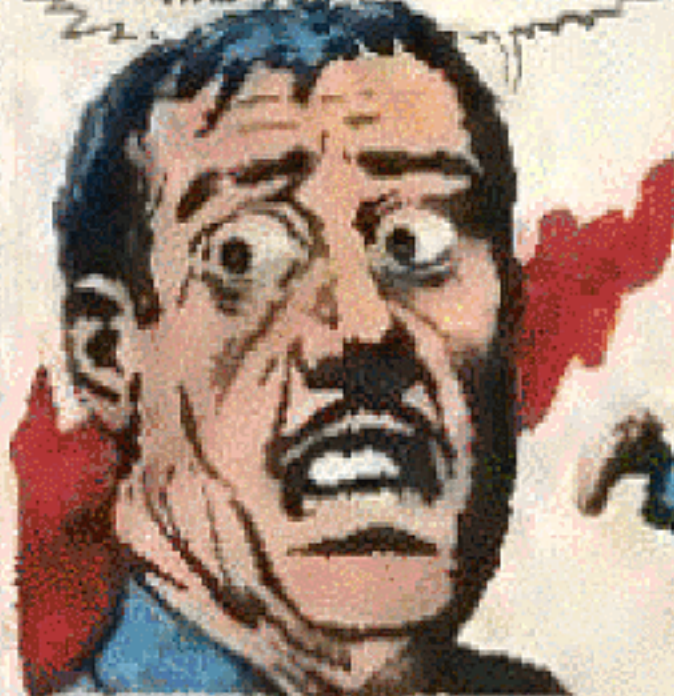
RAZOR BLADES? THE WALLS ARE LINED WITH RAZOR BLADES? THEY WANT ME TO CUT MYSELF?

HURRY, MR. GRUNWALD! HURRY!



A SOUND BEHIND GUNNER FROZE HIS BLOOD: A SHRIEK AND A SQUEAK OF A DOOR OPENING.

BRUTUS! HUNGER-CRAZED BRUTUS! THEY'VE FREED HIM TOO!



GUNNER BEGAN TO RUN. HE HAD TO REACH FREEDOM BEFORE THAT STARVED DOG CAUGHT HIM! HE RAN DOWN THE TWISTING MAZE CORRIDORS, THE SOUND OF THE LOPING SMARLING DOG BEHIND HIM.

OH, LORD... LORD...

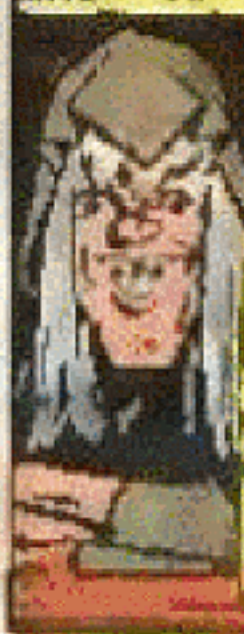


AND THEN SOME IDIOT TURNED OUT THE LIGHTS!



DOGS! WRONG TURN, GUNNER! NOW, NOW! DON'T GO TO PIECES! AFTER ALL, IT'S ALMOST LIKE BEING BLIND! WELL, KIDDIES, THAT'S MY SICKENING STORY FOR THIS FIRST ISSUE OF G.R.'S NEW MAG! NOW IT'S TIME TO CLOSE

THE VAULT OF HORROR AND TURN YOU BACK TO HIM. AS THE DISMEMBERED PARTS OF A CORPSE SAID WHEN THEY WERE SHIPPED TO THE UNDERTAKER'S: 'WE'LL GET TOGETHER AGAIN!' 'BYE!





# GONE TO SEED

It was back-breaking work, but it *had* to be done. Right away, too. He couldn't risk having the body of his wife in the cellar any longer . . . one of the farm hands might accidentally stumble over the corpse and start asking mighty dangerous questions. It was urgent, Dan Gret knew, to dispose of Emily right now, in this field he was plowing for spring planting. No sense in leaving a murdered wife around for the law to find!

Dan Gret heard the farm hands chattering over in the next field . . . he'd have to bawl 'em out about all this horsing around on *his* time. But at the moment he was too busy trying to gouge a hole in the ground. At first he'd been worried about the noise his shovel would make as he burrowed into the earth, but that had been taken care of without much trouble. The motor of the idling plow made so much noise that those loafers working for him wouldn't pay him any mind. And the bulk of the machine had been carefully maneuvered into place so that it acted as a shield between him and the overtalked men seedling the adjoining acre. Thus, Dan Gret had resolved, was to be a *private* burial!

Dan Gret crouched low, in the shadow of the plow. By stretching out full length, he managed to tug the corpse from behind the grumbling machine and ouadge it into the makeshift grave. There would be less than a foot of dirt blanketing Emily's body . . . but as soon as the hired hands got a day off he'd hurry back and dig a good deep hole to house the corpse. Within a few weeks the seeds'd be sprouting and the field would burst into furious bloom. Dan Gret grinned as he patred the last shovellul of dirt into place. Not only

was he getting rid of this devil he'd grown to hate . . . he was also helping to fertilize the coming crop!

He straightened up and surveyed his work with a critical eye. His eyes popped: one of Emily's hands was sticking up out of the soil! He lunged forward . . . and heard, with dread, the sound of voices approaching. Those buns who worked for him were coming across the field in his direction!

Dan Gret sprang toward the droning plow. If he could move the machine sideways just a few feet . . . set it directly over Emily's body . . . the danger of the moment could be averted. He turned once, to look back at the tell-tale mound . . . and his foot slid out from under him. His arms flailed the air frantically as he tried to regain his balance: his hand crashed sharply against the gear lever. The plow started immediately to swing in a tumbling circle, because of the way he had cramped the steering wheel. In motionless horror he saw the glittering blades bearing down on him!

Dan Gret screeched in alarm. Then the razor-sharp metal slashed through his flesh . . . the ponderous steel crunched over his writhing body . . . the huge wheels groaned over him so that he was drenched in his own gushing blood!

By the time the farm hands reached him, Dan Gret was slashed almost beyond recognition. With gaping wonder the hired men started down at Dan Gret's corpse . . . buried alongside that of his wife Emily, in the gory, blood-spattered grave. It was a real family plot!



# E.C. WENT TO SEA IN SEARCH OF ANOTHER NEW TREND...



AND WE CAME UP WITH...  
SAGAS OF THE SEA, SHIPS, PLUNDER AND...

# PIRACY

NOW YOU SEARCH  
FOR IT!

BUT IF YOU CAN'T FIND *PIRACY*  
AT YOUR LOCAL NEWSSTAND, YOU  
CAN SUBSCRIBE! JUST FILL OUT  
THE COUPON AND MAIL, TOGETHER  
WITH **ONE HUNDRED PIECES OF  
CENT** (THAT'S ONE BUCK, LAND-  
LUBBERS!), TO:

THE SEASON EDITORS OF  
*PIRACY*  
ROOM 706  
125 LAFAYETTE STREET  
N.Y.C. 12, N.Y.

OKAY, BRUCE RATS! YOU SHANGHAIED ME!  
I ENCLOSE \$1.00 FOR THE NEXT EIGHT ISSUES  
OF *PIRACY*!

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

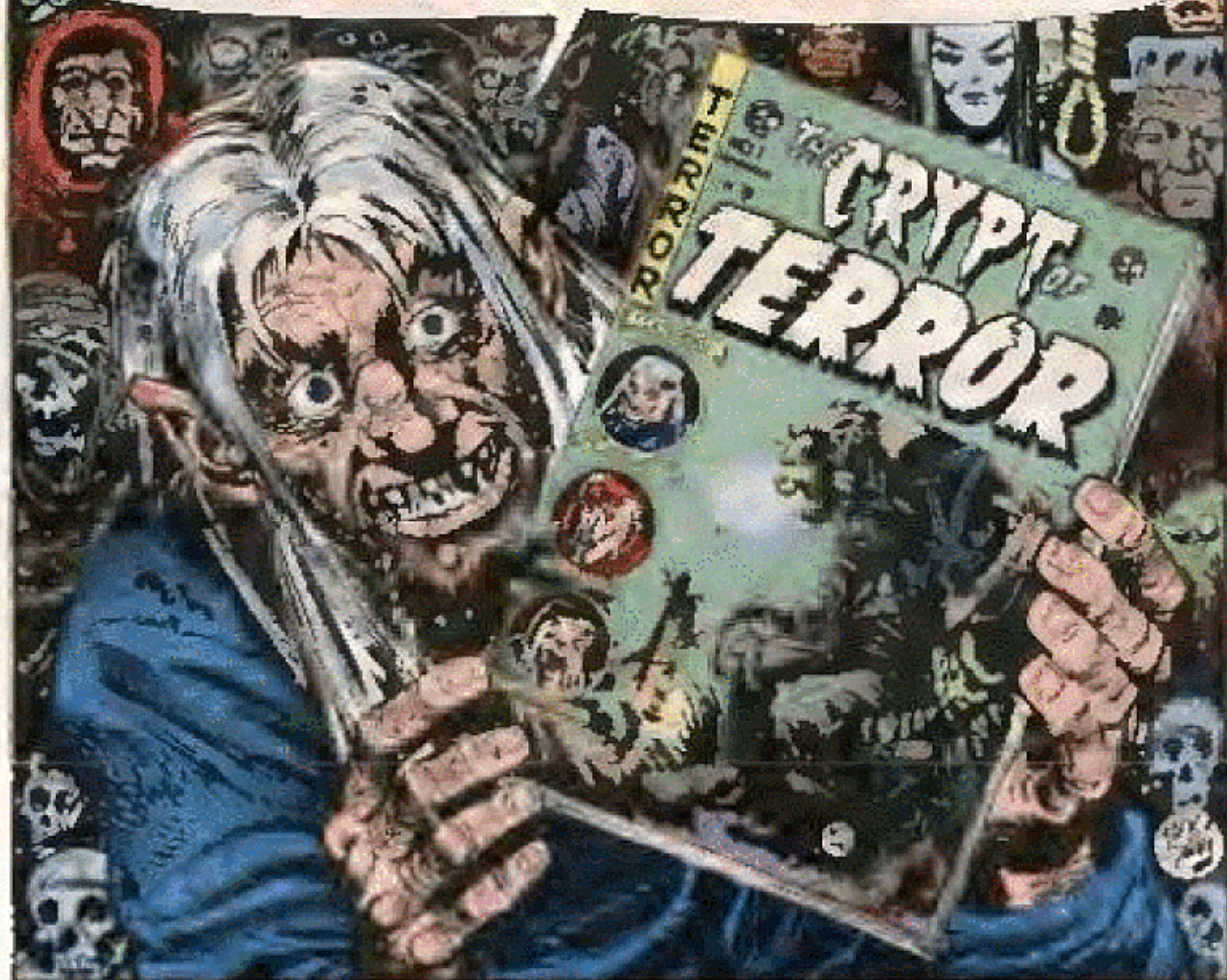
CITY \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP  
NO. \_\_\_\_\_



**A POINT OF ORDER! IF YOU'RE EXPECTING E.C.'S NEWEST HORROR MAG TO BE BETTER THAN TALES FROM THE CRYPT, THE VAULT OF HORROR, AND THE HAUNT OF FEAR, YOU'LL BE SADLY DISAPPOINTED! IT'S ONLY JUST AS GOOD!**



**INVESTIGATE YOUR FAVORITE NEWSSTAND FOR THE FIRST "JUST-AS-GOOD" ISSUE! HOWEVER IF YOU'RE TIED UP WITH RED TAPE (ADHESIVE, THAT IS!) AND YOU'D RATHER SUBSCRIBE, FILL OUT THE COUPON AND SEND IN, TOGETHER WITH AN UNDOCTORED PHOTO OF GEORGE WASHINGTON ON A \$1.00 BILL YOU'LL RECEIVE 8 UNCROPPED ISSUES IN THE MAIL.**

**THE CRYPT-KEEPER  
ROOM 706  
225 LAFAYETTE STREET  
N.Y.C. 12, N.Y.**

**HERE'S MY BUCK SEND ME THE NEXT 8 ISSUES OF YOUR NEWEST MAG, THE CRYPT OF TERROR.**

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS** \_\_\_\_\_ **PHONE NO.** \_\_\_\_\_

**CITY** \_\_\_\_\_ **STATE** \_\_\_\_\_



HERE'S HOW ONE FAILURE TURNED HIS MISERABLE LIFE INTO A HORRIBLE...

# SUCCESS STORY



THE POLICE SURGEON INSERTED THE HOLLOW NEEDLE INTO ELMER'S ARM AND SECONDS LATER THE SODIUM PENTOTHAL SOLUTION WAS FLOWING INTO HIS BLOODSTREAM, TAKING ITS EFFECT. ELMER'S SHRILL MANIACAL LAUGHTER FADED INTO A WHEEZING SIGH. THE RAPID FURY OF HIS CONVULSIVE STRUGGLING SUBSIDED INTO HELPLESS EXHAUSTION. THE THREE BRANNY POLICEMEN RELAXED THEIR HOLD THEN, AND MOPPED THEIR SWEAT-BEADED BROWS. ELMER PRESTON SLUMPED LIMPLY ON THE GRASSY SOFA, HIS FLACCID FACE DRAINED TO A YELLOW-GREENISH HUE. HIS USUALLY SOFT, LIQUID-BROWN EYES WERE SLAZED AND STARRING NOW. HE STARTED TO SPEAK, WITHOUT EMOTION, IN A GUTTERING MOROTONE...

I'M GLAD I DID IT! IT...IT *HAD* TO BE THIS WAY. DON'T YOU SEE?

NO, MR. PRESTON, WE DON'T SEE. YOU'D BETTER TELL US ABOUT IT!



ELMER'S FACE TOOK ON A THOUGHTFUL EXPRESSION AND HIS EYES SHADED OVER WITH A DISTANT LOOK, HAUNTED WITH MEMORIES OF THE PAST. HE SIGHED DEEPLY, THEN SPOKE AGAIN IN A COLORLESS DRONING VOICE...

I...I WAS ALWAYS A *TIMID* MAN, IT'S NOT *GOOD* FOR A MAN TO BE *TIMID*... ESPECIALLY A *MARRIED* MAN. ESPECIALLY A MAN MARRIED TO A *WOMAN* LIKE *IDA*?



"*WATER*, WE COULD HAVE BEEN HAPPY TOGETHER IN OUR LITTLE APARTMENT... *IDA* AND I. BUT ONE EVENING HER FOLKS CAME TO DINNER. HER FATHER WAS ALL TENSE, BUSTLING WITH MENS THAT HE FINALLY EXPLODED ON ME AT DESSERT...

ELMER, YOU MUST BE A *WONDERING* HOW COME MR. AND I DON'T GIVE YOU TWO A *WEDDING* GET

WHY, NO, MR. WALLACE I NEVER



Ch. Chaudron





SURE YOU WONDERED? WELL, SON... WE'VE GOT A SURPRISE! WE'RE GIVING YOU A START ON A HOME OF YOUR OWN! ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS FOR A DOWN PAYMENT...

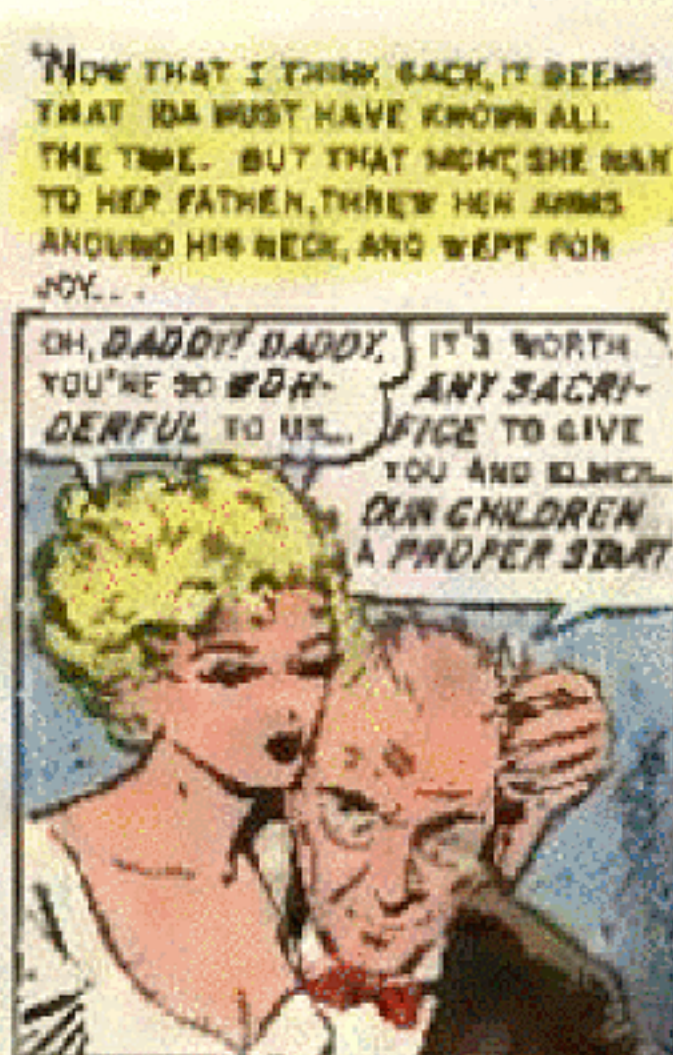
ONE THOUS. WHY, MR. WALLACE? I-I HARDLY KNOW WHAT TO SAY...



"I SHOULD HAVE SAID, 'NO THANK YOU', BUT I SAW NO HIDDEN TRAP AT THE MOMENT. AND WHEN ELMER GOOD WILL, MR. WALLACE OFFERED ME HIS HAND, I CLASPED IT GRATEFULLY..."

JUST BE GOOD TO MY DAUGHTER, ELMER... AND BE HAPPY TOGETHER!

TH-THANK YOU, SIR.



"NOW THAT I THINK BACK, IT SEEMS THAT ICA MUST HAVE KNOWN ALL THE TIME. BUT THAT NIGHT, SHE RAN TO HER FATHER, THREW HER ARMS AROUND HIS NECK, AND WEPT FOR JOY..."

OH, DADDY! DADDY, YOU'RE SO GOOD-IT'S WORTH ANY SACRIFICE TO GIVE YOU AND ELMER OUR CHILDREN A PROPER START

"FOR AN ECTATIC TWO WEEKS, ICA AND I HOUSE HUNTED. WE FOUND THIS PLACE... SMALL, COMFORTABLE, A DREAM COTTAGE. THE DOWN PAYMENTS FINISHING THE PLACE EMPTIED MY BANK ACCOUNT, BUT I WAS GLIBBLY HAPPY. THE SUNDAY AFTER WE MOVED IN, THE WALLACES CAME TO SEE OUR NEST..."



I DON'T UNDERSTAND, MR. WALLACE...

YOU REMEMBER I SAID MIN AND I WERE MAKING A SACRIFICE TO HELP YOU GET STARTED IN YOUR OWN HOME, ELMER...

THE POINT, HENRY! GET TO THE POINT!



THE POINT IS, ELMER, WE HAD TO GO INTO HOCK TO GET THAT THOUSAND DOLLARS FOR TOLL AND THEN MY BUSINESS SLOWED DOWN, AND, RIGHT NOW, WHAT WITH WHAT I ONE... I... I

WELL, WE'RE HAVING TROUBLE MAKING ENDS MEET, ELMER

"I WAS BEING TAKEN FOR A WELL-PLANNED RIDE... AND MY LOVING WIFE HAD THE STEERING WHEEL IN HER OWN LITTLE CLUTCHING HANDS..."



WE CAN'T LET MOTHER AND DADDY SUFFER... NOT AFTER ALL THEY'VE DONE FOR US, CAN WE, DEAR? TELL THEM THEY'RE WELCOME TO SHARE WHAT WE HAVE UNTIL THINGS ARE BETTER. TELL THEM!

HUH... ICA, THAT'S... THAT'S RIGHT! OF COURSE!

"THAT WAS THE FIRST FAINT RUMBLING OF THE TEMPEST YET TO COME. THE WALLACES GAVE UP THEIR APARTMENT AND MOVED IN WITH US. ICA WAS A MOST GENEROUS DAUGHTER..."



RIGHT IN HERE, MOTHER AND DADDY! WE'LL LET THEM HAVE OUR ROOM, ELMER. IT'S CLOSER TO THE BATHROOM, AND SINCE IT'S ONLY TEMPORARY...



"TEMPORARY, SHE SAID" BUT BEFORE I KNEW IT, THEY'D BEEN THERE FIVE WEEKS. I COULD JUST ABOUT MANAGE TO MEET MY BILLS, IF THERE WEREN'T OTHER DEMANDS ON MY SMALL INCOME.



BUT, I CAN'T AFFORD A T.V. SET, MR. WALLACE... NOT EVEN A SMALL-SCREEN SET!

THAT'S GRATITUDE! I GIVE YOU \$1000 FOR A HOME, AND YOU EXPECT ME TO FURNISH IT, TOO?



BELIEVE ME, I'M GRATEFUL... BUT THAT MONEY WAS JUST ENOUGH TO LET ME GO INTO DEBT FOR THE NEXT TWENTY YEARS. SADDLED WITH A MORTGAGE, I'VE GOT PAYMENTS TO MEET... ON THAT... AND THE OTHER FURNITURE... AND...

THEN A FEW MORE DOLLARS A MONTH WON'T HURT! TELL YOU WHAT? I'LL PUT THE TEN BUCKS DOWN ON THE T.V. SET!

AFTER MR. WALLACE GOT HIS T.V. SET, MR. WALLACE HAD A REQUEST:



YOU'LL SEE ELMER WITH WHAT YOU SAVE ON LAUNDRY FOR THE FOUR OF US. THIS WASHING MACHINE WILL PAY FOR ITSELF!

MONTHS WENT BY, MY BURDEN GREW AND WEIGHED UPON ME LIKE A MILLSTONE. ONE DAY I FOUND THE COURAGE TO TALK TO IDA...



I LIKE YOUR FOLKS, IDA, BUT I CAN'T GO ON SUPPORTING THEM FOR...

SUPPORTING? AFTER WHAT THEY'VE DONE! WHAT A LOATHSOME WAY TO REPAY THEM FOR THEIR BENEVOLENCE!

THE CORNERS OF IDA'S MOUTH DROPPED, AND HER EYES WERE COLD AND HARD... PIERCING ME THROUGH AS SHE SPOKE...



YOU'RE BLAMING MOTHER AND DADDY BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT A GOOD PROVIDER. YOU MIGHT AS WELL KNOW IT, ELMER. I'M NOT SATISFIED... NOT AT ALL SATISFIED. I THOUGHT YOU HAD AMBITION! I THOUGHT YOU'D GO PLACES... GET AHEAD IN THE WORLD. INSTEAD, YOU'RE STUCK IN A POOR PAYING JOB.

IDA SPOKE BITTERLY AND LOUDLY... LOUD ENOUGH FOR HER PARENTS TO HEAR. THEY ACCEPTED IT AS AN INVITATION TO JOIN HER FIERCE HARANGUE...



SOMETIMES I WISH IDA HADN'T. WELL, I'D BETTER NOT SAY WHAT I'M THINKING!

I THOUGHT YOU HAD OUTS, SON! I THOUGHT YOU'D WANT TO GET AHEAD!

DRIVEN MORE BY DESPERATION AND DEBT THAN BY THEIR SCORN, I FINALLY GATHERED THE COURAGE TO ASK MY BOSS, MR. BENTLY, FOR A RAISE. BUT THE MINUTE I ENTERED HIS PLUSH OFFICE...



I'VE BEEN MEANING TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT YOUR WORK, PRESTON. YOU'VE BEEN BEING CARELESS LATELY. SLOPPY... VERY SLOPPY!

I... I DIDN'T REALIZE, MR. BENTLY! I'M SORRY, SIR! I'LL DO BETTER IN THE FUTURE! I PROMISE!



'I HAD UNCOVERED A CAN BY COMPLAINTS AGAINST IDA'S FOLKS, AND FROM THAT DAY ON, A SPITEFUL TORRENT OF CRITICISM POURED THROUGH THE FLOODGATES AT ME...'



WHAT ABOUT THAT RAISE I TOLD YOU TO ASK FOR, ELMER? WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO GET ENOUGH HEAVE?

ASK FOR? YOU DON'T ASK FOR A RAISE? YOU DEMAND IT! THAT'S THE ONLY WAY TO GET AHEAD, BY DEMANDING...

'HOW COULD I TELL THEM MR BENTLY HAD MORE THAN REFUSED ME & RAISED THEY GAVE ME NO PEACE, FROM THE MOMENT I CAME HOME FROM WORK...'



WELL, ELMERY HOW'D YOU MAKE OUT? DID YOU TELL THAT BOSS OF YOURS TO COME AROUND OR GET A NEW BOY?

I TOLD HIM NOTHING, MR WALLACE. NOBODY TALKS THAT WAY TO MR. BENTLY!

'...AND I'D ALWAYS GET THE SAME RESPONSE...



YOU DIDN'T. GOOD LORD, MAN! DON'T YOU WANT TO GET AHEAD IN THIS WORLD?

'EVERY MEAL BECAME A NIGHTMARE, FROM THE TIME I'D SIT DOWN...



YOU'RE A FAILURE, ELMER! I CAN'T STAND A FAILURE!

ALL MY LIFE I FOUGHT TO GET AHEAD...

'I'D FORCE MYSELF TO EAT, AND THE TASTELESS FOOD WOULD SOUR ON THE WAY DOWN...'



DON'T WASTE YOUR BREATH, HERBERT! YOU CAN'T TURN A JELLY-FISH INTO A TIGER SHARK, I ALWAYS SAY!

'SUDDENLY THERE'D BE A VIOLENT CHURNING IN THE PIT OF MY STOMACH AND I'D HAVE TO RUN FROM THE ROOM...



GO ON! RUN! IF I WERE IN YOUR SHOES, I WOULDN'T WANT TO HEAR THE TRUTH ABOUT MYSELF, EITHER!

GEE? IF YOU TRY TO TELL HIM SOMETHING FOR HIS OWN GOOD AND HE RUNS OFF IN A HUFF, HE'S INSULTED!

GARB & HUFF!

'I MAKE IT TO THE BATHROOM MOST OF THE TIME... AND ALL BUT HEAVE UP MY INSIDES...'



YOU MARRIED A REAL LEMON, IDA!

HE'LL NEVER AMOUNT TO ANYTHING!

CHOKER...



"NOW DID THE TORMENT STOP WHEN WE WENT TO BED. IDA WOULD HAD ME TILL SHE WAS HOARSE, AND I'D COVER MY HEAD WITH MY PILLOW, BUT I'D STILL HEAR."

ONLY SIXTY-SEVEN MISERABLE DOLLARS A WEEK... IN THESE DAYS, I'M ASHAMED FOR MOTHER AND DADDY TO KNOW. BUT OF COURSE THEY DO KNOW. THEY KNOW THE KIND OF CLOTHES I WEAR. THEY SEE THE FURNITURE. THREADBARE... JUNK!

PLEASE... IDA! IT'S LATE.



SO THE MONTHS DRAGGED INTO YEARS. AND THE WALLACER STAYED ON WITH US, NAGGING ME, HOUSING, COMPLAINING. ALWAYS COMPLAINING...

YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOU BOUGHT THAT WASHING MACHINE? I TOLD YOU IT DIDN'T PAY TO BUY CHEAP. WELL, IT'S READY FOR THE JUNKHEAP!

IT WON'T GET LONELY THERE, BELIEVE ME. IT'LL HAVE THAT STINKING TWELVE-INCH-SCREEN T.V. SET FOR COMPANY.



"WHEN I'D HEARD ALL I COULD STAND, I'D HURRY FROM THE LIVING ROOM."

NEVER MIND, MOTHER! FROM NOW ON, I'LL DO THE BUYING! WE CAN'T AFFORD MUCH, MAYBE, BUT WHAT WE DO GET WILL BE THE BEST!



"EVER A LOCKED DOOR WAS NO GUARANTEE OF PRIVACY."

ARE YOU GOING TO STAY IN THERE ALL NIGHT, ELMER? LISTEN... ABOUT THE T.V. SET! I WAS DOWNTOWN TODAY, TALKING TO A DEALER ABOUT A TRADE-IN ON A LARGER SCREEN, AND...



"I WAS TOO TIMID TO ADMIT IT TO MYSELF THEN, BUT I'D COME TO HATE IDA AND HER MOTHER AND FATHER. I'D BE SHAVING IN THE MORNING AND MY WIFE WOULD COME IN AND THE DAY'S DRAGGING WOULD BEGIN..."

I DON'T SEE WHY DADDY SHOULD HAVE TO KEEP POUNDING IT INTO YOU! YOU SHOULD WANT TO GET AHEAD YOURSELF, ELMER.

I KNOW, DEAR.



"THIS MORNING, AS ALWAYS, WE SAT AT THE BREAKFAST TABLE AND I LISTENED TO THEM TALKING. YAKING. AND NEARBY, THE STORM GATHERED. I COULD HEAR IT RUMBLING..."

A MAN WITHOUT AMBITION IS A WALKING CORPSE, ELMER! I KNOW I'M REPEATING MYSELF, BUT TRY TO BE A SUCCESS. TRY, ELMER. ELMER? YOU LISTENING?

HUH? OH, YES! YES, I'LL TRY!



"AND TODAY, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YEARS, I DIDN'T GO TO WORK. I WANDERED AROUND THE STREETS, WONDERING WHAT WAS WRONG WITH ME, LISTENING TO THE STORM THUNDERING IN THE DISTANCE, COMING CLOSER... CLOSER... READY TO BREAK AT ANY MOMENT..."

WHY DON'T I GET AHEAD? EVERYBODY ELSE DOES! I'VE GOT TO! I'VE... HEN... HEN... I'VE... EH... EH...





"WHEN I GOT HOME THAT NIGHT, LATE FOR DINNER, THEY JUST STARED AT ME... IDA AND MR. WALLACE AND MRS. WALLACE. THE STORM RUMLED AROUND... THREATENING... THREATENING TO BREAK... THERE... IN MY THROBBING HEAD... AND I JUST STARED BACK AT THEM..."



WELL!

IT'S ABOUT TIME!

WHERE WERE YOU TODAY? MR. BENTLY CALLED!

"THEN, SUDDENLY, THE STORM TORE LOOSE... HOWLING, SCREAMING-BLACK AROUND ME... THUNDERING... WILD TEMPEST-FURY AND ABOVE THE STORM, THEIR VOICES... THEIR NASTY VOICES..."



IS THAT THE WAY TO TRY TO GET AHEAD... STAY HOME FROM WORK?

YOU SAID YOU'D TRY TO GET AHEAD, ELMER!

WHY CAN'T YOU GET AHEAD, ELMER?

"I RAN OUT... BUT NOT TO THE BATHROOM THIS TIME. I RAN TO THE KITCHEN... THROUGH THE RAGING STORM, I CAME BACK WITH THE MEAT CLEAVER..."



ELMER!

"THE STORM SHRIEKED IN MY BRAIN. WHITE BLINDING LIGHTNING FLASHES EXPLODED. THE BLACK FURY TURNED RED... RED... SPURTING RED AS I CHUNG THE CLEAVER..."



ELMER!

YAAAAAH!

ELMER PRESTON STARED STRAIGHT AHEAD, SMILING. THE WILD GLEAM RETURNED TO HIS EYES, AND HE CHOKED OUT MORE WORDS BETWEEN SHORT, HIGH-PITCHED BUNTS OF LAUGHTER...



SO YOU SEE, I... EH, EH... DID GET AHEAD... EH, EH... AFTER ALL!

AND SLOWLY, THE POLICEMEN FOLLOWED ELMER'S WILD GAZE TO THE DINNER TABLE... TO THE MEAT PLACE SETTINGS... AND THE PLATES WITH THEIR HARROWING FARE STARRING BACK AT THEM...

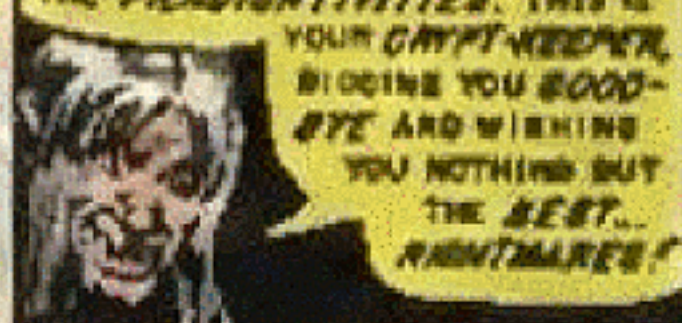


E... EH, EH... I NOT ONLY GOT A HEAD... E... EH, EH... I GOT THREE HEADS!

YEAH, PRESTON! CHOKER... WE SEE...

YOU WERE A REAL SUCCESS, PRESTON!

HEH, HEH... A TRIPLE HEADER, EH, KIDDEST? SO, IDA AND HER FOLKS BROVE ELMER BATS, BUT THEY WENT OUT ON STRIKES... IN ONE, TWO, THREE ORDEN, ALL RIGHT OVER THE PLATE. WELL, THE GAME'S OVER NOW. CALLED ON ACCOUNT OF MENTAL STORM! AND YOU AND I WILL TAKE A RAIN-CHECK TILL NEXT WE MEET. HOPE YOU LIKED MY NEW WAG, NOW THE OLD WITCH AWAITS TO BIND UP THE FIENDISH TIVITIES. THIS IS YOUR GYPT-KEEPER, BIDDING YOU GOOD-BYE AND WISHING YOU NOTHING BUT THE BEST... RAINMAKER!





# THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEE! AND NOW IT'S WIND-UP SPOT IN C.K.'S NEW CREEPS COMIC, AND YOUR SHIVER-CHEF, THE OLD WITCH, IS READY TO STIR UP HER CRUDDY CAULDRON AND LAKE OUT A LURID LITERARY LUNCHEON. THIS TASTY TALE OF TERROR-TREMORS IS TOLD BY ONE TONY BARRETT. LISTEN, NOW, AS HE GASPS OUT THE DELIRIUM DISH HE CALLS...

## TATTER UP!

MEE? I'M TONY BARRETT. I'M NOT A BAD-LOOKIN' GUY. I'M YOUNG, TOO. THIRTY-FOUR. O.KAY. SO NOW COME I COULD SIT AROUND ON A ROT-REEKIN' COUCH, HOLDIN' HANDS WITH A SNAGGLE-TOOTHED HAG NAMED FANNY OGDEN? HOW COME I COULD STAND THE MILDEN-YELLOWED WALL PAPERS... THE CRACKED CERIMES... THE WHOLE HOUSE STINKIN' LIKE THE BOWEL OF A DUS-UP COFFIN... AND THE STINK OF FANNY HERSELF? YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT! YOU GOT THE PICTURE! FANNY, OGDEN WAS SUPPOSED TO BE LOADED!



DEANEY

I... I BEEN MEANIN' T' ASK YOU, FANNY. I JUST DON'T KNOW HOW! I... I BEEN MEANIN' T' ASK YOU IF YOU'LL MARRY ME!

OH, TONY! I'VE BEEN PRAYIN' YOU'D ASK ME... DREAMIN' OF IT... BUT NEVER REALLY BELIEVIN' YOU WOULD! OH, YES, TONY! YES! I WILL MARRY YOU!

SURE I WANTED THAT HORRORSOME WITCH FOR A WIFE. I WANTED TO MARRY THE HUNDRED GRAND FORTUNE I'VE HEARD ABOUT... THE DOUGH HER FIRST HUSBAND HAD LEFT HER. THE MISERABLE WITCH WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE EVERY LAST CENT OF IT. AND THERE, IN THAT FOUL-SMELLIN' FILTHY HOUSE...

THEN I GUESS... CHOKED THIS CALLS FOR A KISS!

IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE I'VE SEEN KISSED, TONY!





WELL, I'LL SKIP THE DRABBIT  
DETAILS EXCEPT TO SAY THAT FANNY  
BECAME MRS. TONY BARRETT, AND  
I STARTED HITTING THE BOTTLE TO  
SPACE MYSELF AGAINST LYING WITH  
HER...

TRouble WITH DRINKS' WAS IT  
USED TO GET ME DOWN, I'D WORRY.  
I'D WORRY REAL BAD...

AFTER THE FIRST TWO WEEKS, I GOT  
REAL DISGUSTED. THERE WAS NO  
HINT OF THE DOUGH...



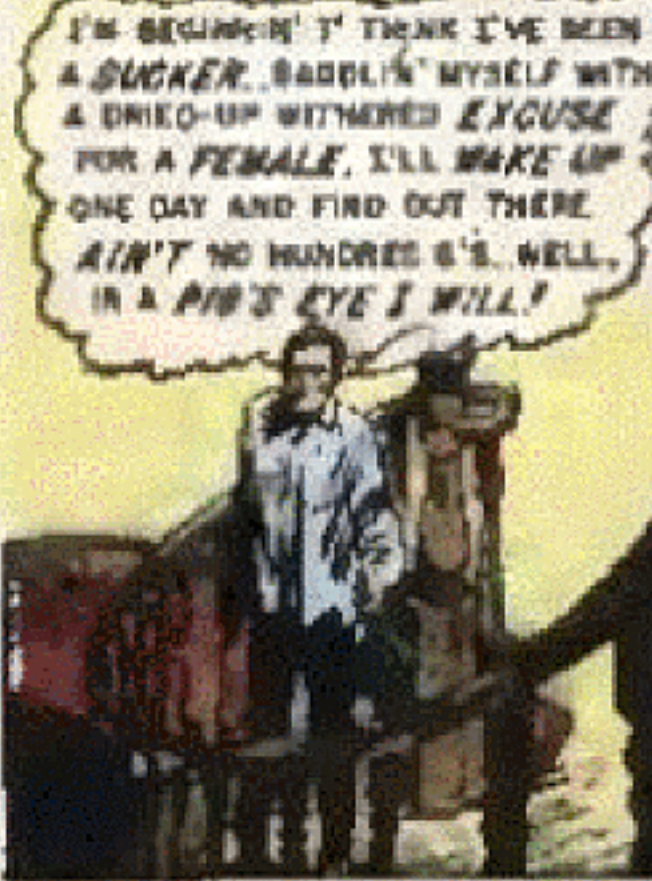
AREN'T YOU COMING  
UP, HONEY-BURT? IT'S  
LATE...

YOU GO  
AHEAD,  
FANNY!

I'LL BE UP  
IN AN HOUR  
OR SO. DON'T  
WAIT UP.



MAYBE THERE *AIN'T*  
NO DOUGH. MAYBE I GOT  
A BUN STEER FROM  
THE GUY THAT TOLD  
ME



I'M BEGINNIN' T' THINK I'VE BEEN  
A SUCKER. SADDLIN' MYSELF WITH  
A DRIED-UP WITHERED EXCUSE  
FOR A FEMALE. I'LL MAKE UP  
ONE DAY AND FIND OUT THERE  
*AIN'T* NO HUNDREDS O'S. WELL,  
IN A PIR'S EYE I WILL!

SO I WENT UP INTO THE BEDROOM WHERE FANNY SAT  
WITH THAT STRANGELY MOP OF HERE UP IN CURLS. BUT  
I DIDN'T LOOK AT FANNY TWICE. I HEADED FOR THE  
CLOSET... FOR MY SUITCASE...

I BOUNCED MY SUITCASE ONTO THE BED AND YOSSED MY  
CLOTHES INTO IT. MY BRIDE JUMPED UP LIKE A NEE'D  
STUNG HER, AND SHE THREW HER BONEY ARMS AROUND  
ME...



TONY? IS THERE  
SOMETHING WRONG?

FEAR, BABY! YOU AND ME!  
I'M CLEARIN' OUT...



TONY! PLEASE! DON'T  
LEAVE ME! PLEASE  
DON'T.

WE MADE A MISTAKE!  
FORGET IT! FORGET  
ME, FANNY!



TONY, I KNOW I'M UGLY. UGLY AND  
OLD. BUT I'M RICH. I NEVER TOLD  
YOU, DID I? I'VE GOT A LOT OF  
MONEY. AND I LOVE YOU, TONY...  
AS MUCH AS I CAN. YOU'RE HANDSOME  
YOUNG. I HAVE JUST A FEW YEARS LEFT  
STAY WITH ME AND MAKE THEM HAPPY  
YEARS, DEAR, AND WHEN I'M GONE, ALL  
THAT MONEY WILL BE YOURS!

OKAY, BABY!  
OKAY! YOU  
TALKED ME  
INTO IT!

WELL, IT TURNED OUT THERE *WAS* MONEY AFTER ALL.  
THE GUY'D BEEN RIGHT. SO I DID MY BEST TO MAKE  
FANNY HAPPY. I STAYED. BUT I WONDERED WHAT  
SHE LIVED ON, IF SHE NEVER SPENT ANY OF HER DOUGH.  
AND ONE DAY, I FOUND OUT...



IS MRS. GORDEN  
AT HO... ..

YOU! THE GUY I MET!  
THE GUY THAT TOLD ME  
ABOUT HER...



I'M A RAGMAN! MRS. OGDEN IS  
WAS. OGDEN  
ALWAYS SELLS  
ME HER OLD  
RAGS...

MRS. OGDEN IS  
MRS. BARRETT  
NOW, MISTER.  
MY WIFE! DON'T  
YOU REMEMBER  
ME? YOU TOLD  
ME ABOUT HER...



YOU HAVE A NICE  
WIFE, SIR. SHE'S  
VERY GOOD TO ME.  
SHE ALWAYS HAS  
RAGS TO SELL  
ME. I'M A  
RAGMAN

MAYBE I'M  
SHOWING BUT  
I COULD  
SWEAR IT  
WAS YOU  
I MET THAT  
NIGHT...



BUT AT THAT MINUTE, FANNY TRUM-  
DLED DOWN THE STAIRS WITH A LOAD  
OF OLD RAGS... MEN'S SUITS...  
WOMEN'S DRESSES, KIDS' CLOTHES.  
THE RAGMAN GRINNED LIKE AN  
IDiot WHEN HE SAW THEM...

FINE, MRS. BARRETT! SEVEN  
VERY FINE! YOU BUCKS...  
GET SEVEN DOL- FOR THAT OLD  
LARS FOR THESE! CARRIAGE?  
WOUL!

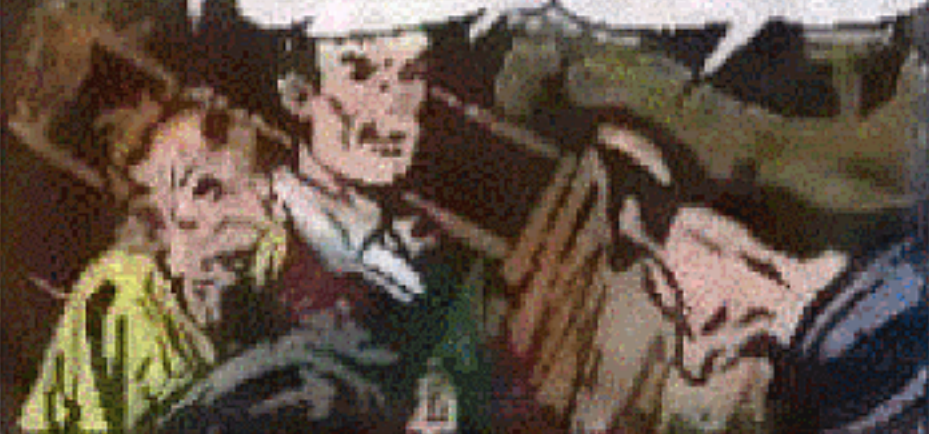


THE OLD CREEP STOPPED COLD AND GAVE ME A  
FISHY STARE, LIKE I'D INSULTED HIM. FANNY  
TRIED TO COVER UP...

TONY DIDN'T  
MEAN ANY-  
THING, HE  
JUST DOESN'T  
UNDERSTAND

YEAH, MAM.  
NO HARD  
FEELINGS!  
IF YOU WANT  
TO OVERPAY,  
IT'S YOUR  
BUSINESS...

YOUR WIFE HAS  
BEEN GOOD TO  
ME... AND I TRY  
TO BE GOOD TO  
HER. HERE YOU  
ARE, MRS. OGDEN...  
MRS. BARRETT!



NICE, HUH? BEIN' MARRIED TO AN OLD HAG WASN'T  
ENOUGH! NOW I HAD TO FIND OUT SHE WAS A  
RAG-PICKER BESIDES. THAT WAS THE LAST  
STRAW. I'D MADE UP MY MIND WHEN FANNY  
ANNOUNCED AFTER LUNCH...

I'M GOING OUT, DEAR  
DON'T BE TOO LONELY  
WHILE I'M GONE!

YEAH, FANNY!  
SURE!



AFTER THE RAGMAN PAID FANNY, HE LEFT. I FELT PRETTY  
SHOK INSIDE... YOU CAN IMAGINE...

WHAT'S WITH THIS RAG  
BUSINESS, BABY? WHERE  
DO YOU GET THEM?

WHY I PICK THEM UP,  
TONY... HERE AND  
THERE...



FANNY DIDN'T SAY WHAT SHE WAS GOIN' OUT FOR, BUT I KNEW  
IT WAS TO DO SOME RAG-PICKIN'. WELL, THAT WAS OKAY WITH  
ME. THAT GAVE ME TIME TO RUMMAGE THROUGH THE RUBBLE-  
CRAMMED ATTIC AFTER SOME PICKIN'S OF MY OWN.

I GOT TO FIND THAT DOUGH! I GOT TO FIND THAT  
DOUGH AND GET AWAY! ME, MARRIED TO A TEAD-FACED  
RAG-PICKER! I'LL GO NUTS IF I HAVE T'KEEP ON  
LIVIN' WITH HER!





I TURNED THAT MATTRESS UPSIDE DOWN BUT IT WAS NO SOAP I DIDN'T FIND A THING...

IT'S GOT TO BE IN THE HOUSE SOMEWHERE! YOU JUST DON'T HIDE A HUNDRED GRAND IN A HOUSEHOLE! I'LL FIND IT IF...

TONY! WHERE ARE YOU, TONY?

IT WAS FANNIE... CALLIN' ME. I WENT DOWN AND GOT NAUSEOUS LOOKIN' AT HER... THAT PATCHED AND FADED DRESS. THE TWO DIFFERENT COLORED COTTON STOCKING-S... AND ON HER FEET... NO KIDDIN'... SNEAKERS. SHE HAD A BIRTY BAGG STUFFED FULL OVER HER SHOULDER...

LOOKS LIKE HUNTHY WAS PRETTY GOOD TODAY, FANNY, HOW MUCH YOU GOT EIGHT BUCKS WORTH, MAYBE TEN?

WHERE WERE YOU, TONY?

I COULDN'T STAND THE MESS AROUND THIS HOUSE ANY MORE, SO I STARTED CLEANIN' UP... IN THE ATTIC.

IN THE ATTIC? OH, WELL, THAT'S NICE.



FANNY DIDN'T SEEM DISTURBED ABOUT ME NOSIN' AROUND UP IN THE ATTIC, SO I FIGURED THAT'S NOT WHERE THE HUNDRED \$'S WAS STASHED AWAY. I WAS ALL ON EDGE WAITIN' FOR HER TO GO OUT AGAIN SO I COULD START LOOKIN' SOMEWHERE ELSE, BUT FIRST THE RABMAN TURNED UP...

FINALLY FANNY LEFT WITH HER BAGGAGE AND I WENT TO WORK ON ONE OF THE UPSTAIRS ROOMS, FEELIN' THROUGH BATTERED NOTH-EATEN FURNITURE, FLOWIN' THROUGH THE TRASH-STUFFED CLOSET...

I COULD SWEAR HE'S THE SAME GUY THAT TOLD ME ABOUT FANNY.

SUCH NICE RAB, WRS. BARRETT SUCH BEAUTIFUL RAB



AFTER A WHILE I GOT MAD AND RIPPED OPEN THE MATTRESS ON THE OLD BRASS BED. I WAS SO BUSY, I DIDN'T HEAR FANNY SNEAK UPSTAIRS AND CREEP INTO THE ROOM LIKE A SCRAWNY OLD CAT. BUT SUDDENLY I FELT HER THERE.

I COULD TELL SHE KNEW WHAT I WAS UP TO, 'CAUSE SHE HAD A SMILE INSIDE THAT BLINDED THROUGH HER EYES. SHE WAS LAUGHIN' IN HER GUTS 'CAUSE I COULDN'T FIND HER HOARD AND IT MADE ME MAD...

FANNY... I...

I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU'RE STILL CLEANING UP, TONY



YEAH, THAT'S WHAT I'M DOIN'... CLEANIN' UP THIS FILTHY PUSTY... MAYBE YOU DON'T LIKE THAT.

I SAID I'M GLAD, HONEY...





THAT'S HOW IT WENT FOR WEEKS, EVERY DAY THAT RAGMAN CAME AND GOT PRACTICALLY DELIRIOUS OVER SOME FOUL RAGS MY WIFE SOLD HIM.

LOVELY... ABSOLUTELY LOVELY, MRS. BARRETT.



AND EVERY DAY, AFTER SHE WENT OUT BORDUNON' THROUGH LORD-KNOWS-WHAT TRASH FOR RAGS, I PLUNGED INTO MY TREASURE HUNT...

I GOTTA FIND IT SOON! I GOTTA GET OUT OF HERE! EVERY MINUTE I STAY IS TIME DUTTA MY LIFE WORSE! IT'S TORTURE!



AND SHE'D COME BACK... KNOWIN' WHAT I WAS UP TO, BUT I DIDN'T GIVE A HANG EXCEPT THAT SHE WAS ALL THE TIME LAUGHIN' AT ME AND I'D GET ALL CHOKED UP WITH HATE FOR HER...

YOU MEN ARE ALL ALIKE. WHEN YOU TRY TO TIDY UP A HOUSE, IT LOOKS WORSE THAN WHEN YOU STARTED.



FINALLY I COULDN'T TAKE IT NO MORE, I COULDN'T STAND FANNIE GIVIN' ME THE HORSE-LAUGH. I COULDN'T STAND LOOKIN' AT HER. SO ONE DAY, I WENT DOWN THE CELLAR AND STARTED DIGGIN'... BUT NOT FOR HER MONEY.

NOW, LET HER COME DOWN HERE! JUST LET HER COME.



AND WHEN SHE GOT HOME THAT DAY, I LISTENED TO HER CALL ME, BUT I DIDN'T ANSWER. I MADE SOME NOISE AND WAITED.

WHY, TONY? HOW CLEVER! YOU'RE GOING TO BURY ALL THE OLD TRASH INSTEAD OF HAVING TO CARRY IT OUTSIDE.

AM, COME OFF IT, BABY! YOU KNOW THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M DOIN'...



FANNIE LOOKED AT ME, REAL COLD LIKE AND WHISPERED SARCASTICALLY...

OF COURSE! YOU'RE DIGGIN' FOR TREASURE, A HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLAR TREASURE!

WRONG AGAIN! I'M DIGGIN' A GRAVE! YOUR GRAVE!



FANNY COULD SEE BY MY FACE I WAS LEVELIN'. IT WAS LIKE SHE'D NEVER EXPECTED THIS TURN OF EVENTS. SHE LET OUT A LITTLE SQUEAL AND STARTED TO RUN. I BEUNG THE PICK HARD...

BOOOOHHH!



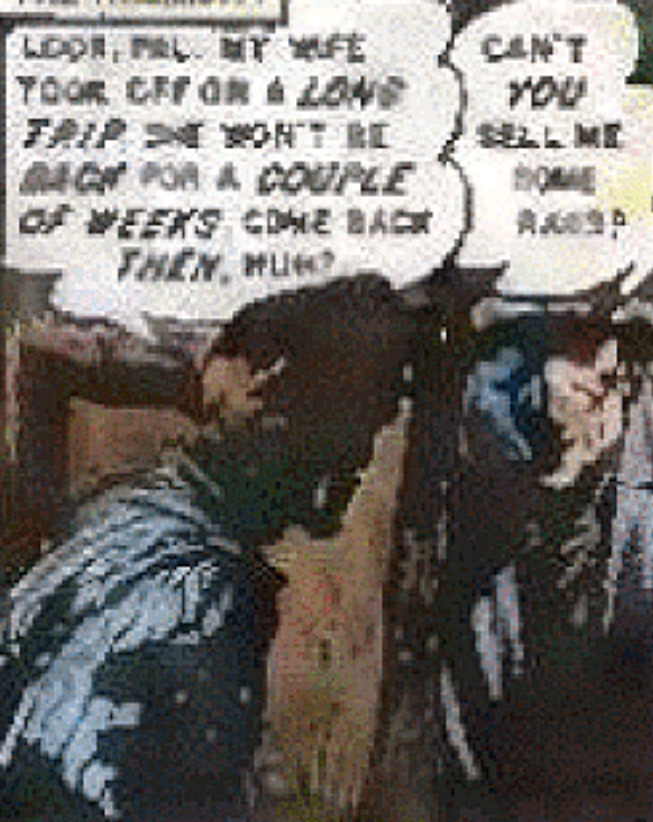


THE PICK HOOKED HER DEEP IN HER BACK AND SHE HIT THE CELLAR FLOOR LIKE AN OLD LUS THEN I WENT TO WORK ON THAT FACE... THAT AWFUL UGLY FACE. IT WAS JUST SOMETHIN' I HAD TO DO. LIKE I WAS GETTIN' EVEN FOR HAVIN' DEGRADED MYSELF BY HAVIN' LOVE TO IT ALL THOSE MONTHS...



UH...UHH. UHHH. UHHHH

I WAS DOB-TIMED FROM WHAT I'D DONE SO I HIT THE HAY EARLY THAT NIGHT AND SLEPT UNTIL I HEARD A SHOUT ON THE FRONT PORCH. IT WAS THE RAGMAN.



LOOK, PAL. MY WIFE TOOK OFF ON A LONG TRIP SHE WON'T BE BACK FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS COME BACK THEN, HUH?

CAN'T YOU SELL ME SOME RAGS?

I WAS READY TO BLAM THE DOOR IN HIS FACE BUT, JUST TO GET RID OF THE PEST, I CHARGED DOWN SOME OLD COATS FROM A CLOSET. HE DIDN'T SEEM HAPPY WITH THEM...



THESE AREN'T VERY NICE RAGS, MR. BARRETT? I CAN'T PAY YOU MUCH FOR THEM...

FORGET IT, PAL! TAKE 'EM... AS A GIFT! NOW, GO AWAY AND DON'T BOTHER ME!

AFTER I FINISHED I DUMPED HER BLOODY BODY INTO THE GRAVE AND COVERED THE WHOLE THING OVER WITH DIRT



WELL, BABY? I SUESS YOU KNOW WHO GOT THE LAST LAUGH NOW

I SPENT DAYS COMBIN' THROUGH THE REST OF THE HOUSE. I EVEN TORE UP THE KITCHEN, SMASHED ABOUT THE WALLS... IT WAS GETTIN' ME DOWN.



IT'S GOT TO BE HERE... SOMEWHERE! IT'S GOT TO! I CAN'T QUIT! I CAN'T.

AME TO TOP IT ALL OFF, THAT CRUMMY CREEP KEPT COMIN' BACK. TILL THIS MORNIN', I FLIPPED MY LID...



I'VE BEEN OVER THIS DUMP FROM ATTIC TO CELLAR! I SAVE YOU EVERY RAG I COULD FIND! I GOT NO MORE RAGS! NOW, FOR GOD'S SAKE, LEAVE ME ALONE!

MRS BARRETT WOULD HAVE RAGS FOR ME...

NOW I'M A GUY WITH A STRONG CONSCIENCE, SO WHAT WITH THE RAGMAN PESTERIN' ME AND FANNY LAYIN' DEAD IN THE CELLAR, I COULDN'T SLEEP TONIGHT. AROUND MIDNIGHT OR SO, I HEARD A NOISE IN THE HOUSE. I GOT A BUN OUT OF MY SUITCASE AND WENT DOWNSTAIRS FOR A LOOK...





THE WHOLE WAS COMIN' FROM THE  
COULAN. I WENT DOWN. IT WAS HIM  
AGAIN... IN MY HOUSE... NOSIN'  
AROUND...

I TOLD YOU I  
GOT NO MORE  
RAGS! NOW

BUT YOU DO!  
NICE RAGS!  
THE CLOTHES  
ON HER!



HE WAS POINTIN' TO FANNY'S GRAVE.  
HE KNEW I'D KILLED HER, AND I  
KNEW THEN I'D HAVE TO KILL  
HIM. I PULLED THE TRIGGER...  
ONCE... TWICE... HE DIDN'T  
EVEN WINCE...

I COULDN'T MISS  
AT SUCH CLOSE  
RANGE! I HIT  
YOU TWICE...  
I CAN SEE THE  
HOLES...

I LOVED HER,  
MR. BARRETT!  
I WANTED HER  
TO BE HAPPY!  
I DIDN'T  
EXPECT THIS!



I EMPTIED THE GUN AT HIM, FOUR  
MORE SHOTS. BUT HE JUST STOOD  
THERE...

SHE NEEDED MORE THAN I COULD  
GIVE HER... SOMEONE YOUNG...  
SOMEONE LIKE YOU! THAT'S  
WHY I TOLD YOU ABOUT  
HER MONEY! I WANTED  
HER TO BE HAPPY!

DIE!  
I SHOT  
YOU SIX  
TIMES!  
DIE  
ALREADY!



I KEPT STARIN' STUNNED AT THE SIX HOLES BURNED  
INTO HIS CHEST. THEN I SNATCHED UP THE PICK I  
SWUNG IT, CATCHIN' HIM BELOW THE SHOULDER, SWINGIN'  
IT INTO HIS BACK.

YOU'RE NOT HUMAN! YOU'RE  
NOT! THERE'S NO BLOOD!  
YOU'RE NOT EVEN FLESH  
AND BONE!

OF COURSE NOT,  
MR. BARRETT



HE LEAPED AT ME, WRAPPING HIS HANDS AROUND MY  
THROAT... FUNNY KIND OF HANDS, SOFT AND STRINGY-  
LIKE. HE KEPT CHOKIN' ME... CUTTIN' OFF MY AIR. I TORE  
AT HIS BODY, TRYIN' T' MAKE HIM LOSE HIS HOLD, AND MY  
HANDS CAME AWAY WITH CHUNKS OF SOFT FOUL-SMELL-  
ING...

RAGS! YOU'RE NOTHING  
BUT... CHOKER, RAGS!

THAT'S WHY I SENT  
YOU TO HER! SHE  
NEEDED MORE THAN  
ME! I LOVED HER...

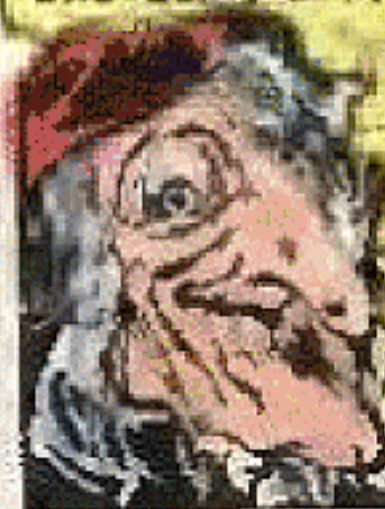


BUT I KNEW SHE COULD  
NEVER LOVE A RAGMAN!

GGNNNNNNNN



SHE'S DIGNIN' THAT RAG-TIME MUSIC,  
NO DOUBT, TONY! WELL, DON'T FEEL BAD!  
NOW THAT YOU'RE DEAD YOU WON'T  
HAVE TO DO IT! THEY'LL DO YOU...  
A GRAVE, THAT IS! WELL, KIDDIES... NEXT  
TIME YOU HEAR THE OLD EXPRESSION...  
"CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN!"... REMEMBER  
THE RAGMAN! OLD CLOTHES DIDN'T...  
IN HIS CASE! WELL, I'VE GOT TO BE  
SHOVELING OFF! HOPE YOU ENJOYED  
THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S  
NEW MORND MUCK-  
MAG, WE THREE  
GHOULNATIONS WILL  
SEE YOU NEXT IN  
MY PUTRID PERROOM,  
THE HAUNT OF  
FEAR! TILL THEN,  
KEEP A STIFF...!



EVERYTHIN'S GOIN' RED AND BLACK NOW. I HEAR A FUNNY KIND OF  
MUSIC IN MY HEAD AND LAUGHIN'... I HEAR FANNY LAUGHIN'...